

Dept. head OFFER TO RESIGN

CANBERRA: The permanent head of the Aboriginal Affairs Department, Mr. B. Dexter has offered to hand in his resignation in favor of a "competent replacement".

But Mr. Dexter said today that this was not because of the current conflict between the Government and the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee over the Charles Perkins issue, and allegations that Mr. Dexter was a "racist."

"There is nothing I would like better than to give up the job," Mr. Dexter said.

"It is a killer and if I stay in it for 10 years I will not be here.

"But I will not abandon the ship half-way through."

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Senator Cavanagh, said he had complete faith in Mr. Dexter and rejected the accusation that he was a racist.

"I think he is one of the most sincere and hard-working men in the Public Service," he said.

Senator Cavanagh said he knew the job was "killing" Mr. Dexter because of the pressure of work in a short-staffed department and "unrealistic demands" made upon it by some Aborigines.

"JUSTIFIED"

Mr. Dexter, 53, has been director of Aboriginal Affairs since 1957.

Mr. Dexter is expected to decide on Monday whether to charge Mr. Perkins, an Aboriginal senior public servant, with a breach of the Public Service Act for having called the Liberal and Country Party Gov-

ernments the most racist in the world.

Mr. Perkins has refused to apologise for his remark which he said could be justified.

Yesterday, Mr. Dexter walked out of a meeting in his office with members of the consultative committee who said they would support Mr. Perkins' right to speak out.

Mr. Dexter left when the presiding chairman of the committee, Mr. E. Bennell, used the term "racist" to Mr. Dexter.

Today Mr. Bennell said he did not regret his remarks to Mr. Dexter.

Mr. Bennell said he had told Mr. Dexter the Labor Party platform should be to the Aboriginal Affairs Department what the Bible was to Christianity.

Mr. Dexter today denied Mr. Bennell's version of the interview.

He said that to the best of his recollection Mr. Bennell had called him a "racist" after he (Mr. Dexter) said that the same Public Service rules must apply to both black and white public servants.

Mr. Bennell said the Government still was treating Aborigines "like idiots and little children."

He believed that the appointment of the consultative committee to advise the Minister on Aboriginal affairs was a "political farce".

He said that Mr. Dexter should resign as permanent head of the department.

In Brisbane tonight Born Free Club members will discuss Mr. Perkins' claims that Liberal and Country Party governments are racist.