

Staff talk strike over Perkins

From STUART SIMSON

CANBERRA. — Personal staff of several federal ministers are likely to strike if aboriginal public servant Mr Charles Perkins is disciplined.

Yesterday five press secretaries and personal secretaries took part in an aboriginal sit-in outside Parliament House during the demonstration.

They included Mr David Halpin, press secretary to the Housing Minister, Mr Johnson, and Mr Brian Stewart, personal secretary to the Media Minister, Senator Douglas McClelland.

Mr Perkins, an assistant secretary in the Aboriginal Affairs Department was suspended after saying that the Liberal and Country Parties were racist.

His case is to go before a Public Service tribunal.

Mr Halpin said yesterday if Cabinet did not support the Prime Minister Mr Whitlam's stand against the charge of improper conduct then: "I will certainly go on strike."

"It's a disgrace," Mr Halpin said.

Public servants at the Aboriginal Affairs Department also have threatened to strike if Mr Perkins is found guilty and punished.

Yesterday, 125 of them signed a letter to the Prime Minister in support of Mr Perkins.

The tribunal is expected to hear the case in the next two weeks.

Mr Perkins has said he will plead guilty to the charge that he made the statement, but not guilty to the charge of improper conduct.

He is expected to be defended by Mr Clive Evatt, QC.