

Cavanagh attacks policy critics

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Cavanagh, attacked yesterday critics of the Government's Aboriginal program.

He took the unusual step of issuing a 13-page document outlining the government's current and past activities in this area.

The Government's Budget program for the current financial year outlays \$163.6 million for Aboriginal Affairs, compared with \$117.4 million in 1973-74 and \$717,400 in 1972-73 and \$582,616 in 1971-72.

Senator Cavanagh spoke "to those who would seek to destroy all that we are trying to do".

Examine own motives

He told these people to examine their own motives when they talked loosely about such things as an alleged hand-out system or an alleged breakdown of law and order.

"Is it not the new freedoms enjoyed by the Aborigines that make you so peevish?" he asked.

"Does it offend you that an Aboriginal Australian now receives award wages, unemployment benefit or

unemployment benefit or other pensions?"

"Does the sight of a drunken Aborigine affront your dignity? Should not your conscience be affronted by the despair of a race, some of whom have turned to drink to blot out 200 years of our 'enlightened' law and order?"

Senator Cavanagh took over the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio 18 months ago.

He said there had been times of much frustration and bitter disappointment, and in the face of real and measurable progress, criticism had been nothing less than a constant, abuse frequent and praise, rare indeed.

However, the Minister said it should not be assumed that money alone — or even money at all — would succeed in improving conditions for Aborigines.

"Although much can be achieved through legislation and the provision of money, human nature, generous and well-intentioned on the one hand, prejudiced and uncaring on the other, complicates even the most seemingly simple procedures".

In housing, health, education and employment, four areas of great need, programs were achieving very real and measurable results.

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Cavanagh, would be better attacking the sort of problems that Aboriginal public servant Mr Charles Perkins was pointing out, than attacking Mr Perkins under Parliamentary privilege, an Aboriginal public servant, Mr Gordon Briscoe, said on Friday.

Mr Briscoe, a senior project officer in the Aboriginal health branch of the Department of Health was commenting on a statement by Senator Cavanagh in the Senate on Thursday, in which he said that Mr Per-

kins and others were making an international trip to "defame and denigrate" Australia, and that Mr Perkins was attacking the Labor Party to enhance his prospects of getting pre-selection for the National Country Party at the next election.

Mr Briscoe said he did not believe that Mr Perkins was a member or supporter of the NCP, which was a supporter of white-superiority policies and the White Australia policy.