

Cavanagh attacks Perkins

Three Aboriginal community figures were undertaking an international tour to "defame and denigrate" Australia, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Cavanagh, said yesterday.

He said a senior officer of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Charles Perkins, with an officer of Aboriginal Hostels Ltd and a departmental liaison officer, had staged a "farical demonstration" outside Australia House in London on Wednesday as part of the denigration campaign.

Replying to a question in the Senate from Senator Devitt (Lab, Tas) on Mr Perkins's activities, Senator Cavanagh said Mr Perkins had been granted 12 months' leave without pay by the Public Service Board to enable him to write a book using an \$11,000 scholarship from the Council for the Arts.

Incorrect rumour

The book — which he (Senator Cavanagh) had criticised — had been written and Mr Perkins was making this tour to spread incorrect rumours about Australia, including one that 2,000 aboriginals in the Northern Territory were suffering from leprosy, Senator Cavanagh said.

This was incorrect, as the Government's medical schemes had helped reduce the incidence of leprosy to 67.

"It is known that Mr Perkins has now embraced the National Country Party policy, despite Mr Bjelke-Peterson's attitude", he said.

"He hopes to be a National Country Party candidate at the next Senate election.

"He is making an international trip to denigrate the Australian Labor Party to enhance his preselection prospects".