

Walk-out at talks on race relations

ALICE SPRINGS, Sunday. — The Mayor of Alice Springs, Alderman Brian Martin, and several other aldermen angrily walked out of a meeting with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Cavanagh, today.

Senator Cavanagh had alleged that the town was on the verge of race warfare, and refused to apologise.

The meeting went on, however, without the mayor and the alderman.

After the meeting, which lasted about two hours, Senator Cavanagh said that he might have been wrong about some aspects of his statement on Friday.

He said that he would welcome a reconciliation with the mayor and the council to enable positive steps to be taken to alle-

viate the town's present tension.

On Friday the Alice Spring's branch of the ALP had dissociated itself from Senator Cavanagh's statements.

At one stage during the meeting a man said Aborigines were "animals who have been living in trees for hundreds of years".

The clash occurred during a special meeting called to discuss deteriorating relations between Aborigines and whites in the town.

Violence during the past two months culmi-

Violence during the past two months culminated in the rape of a white woman by eight Aborigines on February 9, followed by a vigilante group of whites attempting to lynch an Aboriginal and paint another one white.

After Senator Cavanagh agreed to the talks authorities in the town undertook a major clean-up of the streets and

Aboriginal camps on the bed of the Todd River.

About 1,000 Aborigines were carried by truck from the town to bush settlements at the end of last week.

About 100 people, including nearly 30 Aborigines from settlements, attended today's meeting.

Alderman Martin said Senator Cavanagh had made a series of statements which had slandered the town.

"Your emotive references to the imminent outbreak of racial warfare, your statements that black and white people walk on opposite footpaths, and whenever one racial group has one of the other within its group he is bashed, are untrue and inflammatory", he said.

"Your comparisons between Alice Springs and Redfern demonstrate a complete lack of understanding of the true position".

Continued on Page 7.

Walk-out at racial talks

Continued from Page 1.

Alderman Martin said Senator Cavanagh had maligned Alice Springs and his statement had exacerbated tension.

He said Alice Springs would have no confidence in him unless he

withdrew his statements and apologised.

Senator Cavanagh accused those who walked out of "playing politics".

He had flown to the town because of urgent requests from several people and organisations

to discuss race relations. His conclusion that the town was near to racial warfare followed communications from prominent people in the town.

"If you say there is not, I withdraw, and I say the need for my presence is not here", Senator Cavanagh said.

Senator Cavanagh rejected calls for the sale of liquor to Aborigines to be restricted.

"While drinking has caused problems in all Aboriginal communities, you have a situation today where Aborigines have been given equality", he said.

"This is a right which we have to maintain and must maintain under our international obligations.

"There is no question of taking drink away from them".

The Reverend Jim Downing, of the United Church, denied that Alice Springs was a racist town, but he said there was a lot of tension which had been caused by a breakdown in communication between blacks and whites.

Senator Cavanagh said the meeting had shown that there were things happening in the town which may indicate discrimination. But he was pleased to see that open warfare was not about to occur.

warfare was not about to occur.

The meeting agreed to establish a committee of local representatives to advise the Department of Aboriginal Affairs on what the town wanted and how racial problems could be solved.

Alderman Martin said later he did not regret withdrawing from the meeting. It was a matter of principle, and the Minister had spoken irresponsibly about Alice Springs even before he arrived.