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Novelist White hits Bicentenary

By TANIA PRICE

NOBEL Prize-winning novelist Patrick White has launched a stinging attack on the Bicentenary, accusing its supporters of being un-Australian.

And the outspoken republican's comments that it was shocking that the "royal goons" would be in Australia for most of the year has been met with outrage.

Prince Charles and Princess Diana fly into Sydney today for the start of a 10-day Bicentennial tour.

Victorian RSL President Bruce Ruxton erupted at the attack.

"He calls them royal goons. I would suggest White himself is the goon.

"I think the Australian public have had a gutful of the Donald Hornes, Manning Clark and Patrick Whites.

"This is supposed to be a happy year, a happy event, a birthday party, but they



● Mr White ...
"royal goons".

are turning it into the most disastrous year ever."

Ardent royalist former Queensland Premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen said: "Patrick White is a man who has never inspired me and I have never been particularly interested in what his opinions are."

It is not the first attack on the royal couple's presence in Australia during the Bicentennial.

Earlier this month actor Max Gillies refused to appear in tonight's Royal

Command performance in Sydney because he was "annoyed that just about everything that is on this year has to be opened by a member of the Royal Family".

Speaking on Channel Nine's *Today* show this morning, Mr White said the Bicentenary should be noted by giving Aboriginals land rights.

"Obviously we can't give them the whole land, but quite a bit of it," he said.

Mr White said he believed "down-to-earth thoughtful Australians" shared his opinion that nothing positive would come from the Bicentennial.

"You can't get serious problems solved by a circus."

Mr White accused the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, of "last minute face-saving clap-trap" over his response to Aboriginal issues in the Bicentenary.

He branded organisers of the Bicentennial celebrations as vulgar philis-

tinians and said the only people to benefit from the year would be greedy con men.

Mr White, responding to criticism that his attacks were un-Australian, said the people who criticised his stand were the un-Australian ones.

"I can't really see a lot to be proud of in our past and certainly not in our present with so many dishonest politicians about, legislating to get monuments to their own glory and so many vulgar, philistine organisers of the whole thing.

"There is no harm in reasonable fun," he said, "but not in these torrents of fun ... I get sick of it."

Mr White said he would stay at home with his Aboriginal and Eureka flags while the rest of the country celebrated Australia Day tomorrow.

Another form of protest was his refusal to allow any of his works to be published or performed in 1988.