

23 June 1981

Opposition to meet WCC party

Opposition MPs will meet the controversial World Council of Churches delegation during its Perth visit.

The Acting Leader of the Opposition, Mr Bryce, said yesterday that he had accepted an invitation to meet the group which is in Australia to study racial discrimination against Aborigines.

All Federal and State MPs have been invited by the Aboriginal Legal Service to talk to the delegation.

The Premier, Sir Charles Court, has rejected an invitation from the WCC for a meeting. He has asserted that the delegation is highly charged politically and that it seeks to create propaganda and divisions in Australian society.

Mr Bryce said that as many State Labor MPs as were available would attend the meeting.

It had been his intention to invite the delegation to a meeting, but the ALS invitation provided an appropriate opportunity for talks.

IMPORTANT

"We believe it is important that the delegation should have access to a range of views on what is happening in this State and we are happy to play our part in enabling the delegation to get such a range of views," Mr Bryce said.

"The refusal of Sir Charles to have anything to do with the delegation is an abrogation of his responsibility."

Sir Charles had a responsibility to see the group if he believed it

was likely to be antagonistic, Mr Bryce said.

In SYDNEY last night the Australian Council of Churches expressed disappointment over the refusals by Sir Charles and the Premier of Queensland, Mr Bjelke-Petersen to meet the delegation.

In a statement the ACC executive said: "We hope that this visit will provide an opportunity for all Australians to reflect on the situation of Australian Aborigines and to make a new resolve to ensure justice for the Aborigines."

The chairman of the Aboriginal advisory committee of the ACC, Mr G. Foley, said that Aborigines hoped that the visit would lead to an independent report to be released internationally.