

be known as "The Parliamentary Task Force on Indian Self-Government", an important recognition by the House of the inquiry's broad nature. Eight matters the Sub-committee on Indian Women and the Indian Act had recommended for further study were added to the Special Committee's reference. A copy of the Special Committee's orders of reference can be found on page v. The Special Committee chose to interpret its mandate broadly, so as to allow witnesses maximum flexibility in offering suggestions about how the relationship between Canada and Indian people should be changed.

The Special Committee was also directed to take account of the Constitutional Conference of March 1983, held for the purpose of identifying and defining the rights of aboriginal peoples. The Constitutional Conference had an influence on the Special Committee's work. Although the Committee's study and the constitutional talks were two quite separate processes, some of the issues overlap, and this proximity created some confusion. In some cases witnesses expressed the fear that the Committee was pre-empting the constitutional process. Some witnesses, particularly those in Alberta, where the Committee travelled in late 1982, felt strongly that no discussions about change in the legislative relationship between Canada and Indian peoples should occur until aboriginal and treaty rights were identified and defined in the Constitution. Still others, while recognizing the necessity of constitutional action, acknowledged that there could be a positive role for legislation.

To emphasize the distinction between its task and the constitutional discussions, the Special Committee suspended its hearings for a short period surrounding the Constitutional Conference. Immediately before the Conference, the Committee issued a press release that drew no conclusions but outlined relevant testimony the Committee had heard relating to issues before the Conference. Members of the Special Committee also attended the Conference as observers.

At the Conference an accord was signed to continue the constitutional process and to place the subject of self-government on the agenda of the next Conference. The Committee thus believes that its report on self-government could be of assistance to those participating in discussions at the next Conference. Moreover, the implementation of some of the Special Committee's recommendations will require constitutional change.

***Ex Officio* and Liaison Members**

As there are no Indian Members of Parliament, the Special Committee invited national aboriginal organizations to work with it to ensure that the issues were well understood by the Committee. The Assembly of First Nations was asked to designate a representative to participate fully in the Committee's work as an *ex officio* member with all rights except that of voting. In addition, the Native Council of Canada and the Native Women's Association of Canada were invited to designate liaison members. Each of the three organizations was also invited to name a researcher to the Committee's staff.

At times throughout its hearings the Special Committee was received with some scepticism. As mentioned earlier, some witnesses felt that the Committee should not have been formed until after the constitutional issues had been resolved. In a number of cases there was uncertainty about the role of the Committee, particularly with respect to the Indian band government proposal initiated by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Develop-