

## Towards self-government for native people

The first constitutional conference on native rights between the federal and the provincial governments since the general election last September 4, was held in Ottawa on April 2-3.

The two-day meeting between leaders from the governments and native groups dealt mainly with the issue of self-government for Canada's aboriginal peoples.

The conference began with a federal proposal for Ottawa and the provinces to make a constitutional promise to negotiate with aboriginal groups on details for establishing institutions of self-government.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said that self-government is the key to changing the plight of aboriginal peoples, who, by all social and economic measurements, are at the bottom of Canadian society.

"Constitutional protection for the principle of self-government is an overriding objective because it is the constitutional manifestation of a relationship, an unbreakable social contract between aboriginal peoples and their governments," said Mr. Mulroney.

### Compromise proposal

As the amending formula of Canada's Constitution requires support from seven provinces representing at least half of the national

population, and as only five provinces — Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland — fully supported the proposal, a compromise solution was put forward.

The new proposal, a constitutional amendment entrenching the principle of a right to self-government, subject to further agreements among native groups and federal and provincial governments, received the additional support of Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia. Some of the provinces, however, refused to give their full support until the reaction of the native groups to the compromise was heard.

The Métis National Council and the Native Council of Canada representing the Métis and non-status Indians indicated their support for the compromise proposal. The Assembly of First Nations, which represents 325 000 status Indians, rejected the offer. The Inuit Committee on National Issues have agreed to consult their communities over the next six weeks. A federal-provincial ministerial conference on native rights has been scheduled for the end of May.

If an agreement is not reached during the May meeting, a further conference dealing with self-government for aboriginal people will be held in 1987.

## Outer space arms control

Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark has announced Canada's support for the agreement reached by the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to establish an *ad hoc* committee to deal with the arms control and outer space issue.

One of the main tasks of the committee will be to identify the issues relevant to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It will consider existing agreements and proposals as well as future initiatives prior to the presentation of its report to the Conference on Disarmament in August 1985.

Mr. Clark said that with the establishment of the committee "Canada will reinforce its efforts and will participate actively and effectively", towards the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The 40 nation-Conference on Disarmament is the only international multilateral body mandated by the United Nations to negotiate on arms control and disarmament issues. The establishment of the *ad hoc* committee conforms with the unanimous resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 12, 1984 requesting that the Conference on Disarmament consider the question of preventing an arms race in outer space as a matter of priority.

## Northern Pakistan program benefits rural population

The Aga Khan Foundation, an international agency with headquarters in Vancouver, British Columbia, is administering a rural support program financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), to help farmers in 377 villages in Northern Pakistan increase food production and increase their income. The Aga Khan rural support program (AKRSP) also involves leadership training and assistance for the integration of women into community activities.

CIDA will contribute \$3.3 million over three years towards the AKRSP in the Gilgit and Chitral districts in Northern Pakistan. Total cost of the project is estimated at \$9.9 million and the additional \$6.6 million will be provided by the Aga Khan Foundation and a number of other non-governmental organizations.

The new program is an extension of an earlier project in the area which undertook



Canada is playing a major role in helping Pakistan develop agricultural techniques to increase food production and the income of farmers in dryland areas.

175 projects benefiting 150 000 people. New irrigation works improved productivity on 2 400 hectares of developed land and brought 1 000 hectares of new land into production. CIDA contributed \$707 500 to the first projects.

The AKRSP will institute 427 individual projects, most of which are short-term infrastructure activities in the \$15 000 range, that will be implemented and maintained by the villagers themselves. They will include 206 irrigation canals, 52 roads, 25 water storage reservoirs and 11 bridges.

### Additional aspects

Other provisions of the program include arrangements for credit for farmers, extension courses in para-veterinary skills, plant protection, and poultry raising, and co-operative marketing of surplus produce by the village organizations. The program will also provide basic skills training for more than 3 700 women from 50 villages.

The project is being implemented by seven teams, each consisting of an organizer, an agriculturalist and an engineer who live and work in the villages. Many of the staff have been recruited locally.

Farming is the chief source of livelihood for almost all of the 500 000 population scattered over 43 000 square kilometers of rugged terrain in Northern Pakistan. The average holding is 0.62 hectares of cultivable land for each household.

D. Mehta: CIDA photo