

with a view to arriving at mutually acceptable constitutional provisions that would secure the rightful place of native people in Canadian society.

While this kind of awareness is not shared by Canadians generally, a witness drew the Committee's attention to the "dramatic change in the last few years".

[The report of the] Mackenzie Valley pipeline inquiry in 1977 discussed the concept of Indian self-determination and called for a social contract between the Indian nations and the political institutions of Canada. Since then, the need for the special constitutional provisions on aboriginal rights and title has been recognized by the Canadian Bar Association in their report, *Towards a New Canada*; by the Pepin-Robarts task force on national unity; by the Quebec government's white paper, *Quebec-Canada: A New Deal*; and by the Quebec Liberal Party proposal, *A New Canadian Federation*. In February 1979, the Prime Minister and the provincial premiers agreed that the Indian peoples had to be considered in a process of constitutional change. They agreed to add a new item to their agenda: Canada's native peoples and the Constitution. On September 28, 1979, Prime Minister Clark agreed that the National Indian Brotherhood would have a full, equal and ongoing role in federal-provincial discussion on that agenda item. In March of this year [1983] a First Ministers' Conference will convene to discuss the definition of indigenous aboriginal nations' aboriginal and treaty rights. (Bella Coola District Council, Special 6:80)

Indian peoples in Canada must control their own affairs. A new relationship is urgently needed that respects the diversity, the rights and the traditions of Indian First Nations.

I think the message . . . is to make absolutely sure . . . we are talking about relationships that respect the traditions and culture of those people . . . without trying to impose on them some kind of non-Indian relationship. If we can do that on the basis of mutual respect and trust, then I think we have gone half way to solving a lot of the problems we have. (Native Council of Canada, Sub 7:9-10)

A new relationship would be beneficial to Canada; it would eliminate the tensions, the inefficient use of funds and the unacceptable social conditions that keep Indian peoples from contributing to the country's progress. In a democratic age, it is incongruous to maintain any people in a state of dependency. The federal government, particularly as represented by Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, would no longer find itself in a conflict of interest situation, being called upon to defend Indian interests while also being expected to represent the federal position.

Indian people would likewise benefit from a new approach. Ending dependency would stimulate self-confidence and social regeneration. Instead of the constant and debilitating struggle now faced by band councils, which are expected to administer policies and programs imposed by the Department of Indian Affairs, Indian First Nation governments would get on with the business of their own governmental affairs. Self-government would also simplify the political position of Indian leaders, who are now caught between the demands of their electors and those of the federal government, which funds their programs.

1. The Committee recommends that the federal government establish a new relationship with Indian First Nations and that an essential element of this relationship be recognition of Indian self-government.

Many witnesses emphasized that, in seeking to establish Indian First Nation governments, they did not wish to create divisions that would weaken Canada. Their object is to change the relationship of Indian First Nations to other governments, not to fragment the