

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

The Future of the Department

This report is based on a major sounding of the views of the Indian peoples of Canada. The Committee heard a cross-section of Indian opinion and concern from one end of the country to the other. Experts were consulted. Legal advice was obtained. The Committee members drew on their own experience and feelings.

The Committee is strongly convinced that a major change in the orientation of federal policy must occur. The federal government must establish new relationships that will enable Indian peoples to break out of the vicious circle of dependency, poverty and despair that now grips them. There is little benefit to be gained by tinkering with the *Indian Act* or adjusting the present policy of devolution.

The Committee has recommended that the federal government recognize Indian First Nation governments as a distinct order of government within the Canadian federation. It has proposed fiscal arrangements that would assure these governments of adequate funding to provide government services, correct infrastructure deficiencies, and undertake economic development. It has urged the adoption of a new claims settlement policy and a process for expediting their resolution.

To carry out these new policies, the Committee has proposed a number of new federal institutions and processes:

- To manage and co-ordinate the federal government's relations with Indian First Nations, there should be a Ministry of State for Indian First Nations Relations. The Minister should have the duty to promote the interests of Indian First Nations.