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provinces having a mandatory role in the negotiation and constitutional protection of self-government agreements.

A subsequent ministerial meeting in June, 1985, was not successful in achieving agreement on an amendment. For its part the federal Government stated that despite the failure to achieve consensus on a constitutional amendment it intended to proceed, within its existing authorities, with community level negotiations aimed at providing concrete examples of self-government in practice.

Since June, 1985, four multilateral meetings have been held at the Minister's level and seven at the officials' level with bilateral discussions with participants continuing throughout. During the first year, June, 1985, to June, 1986, the federal Government had two main goals. The first was to re-establish a positive climate for the discussions and negotiations. The second goal in this period was to ensure a full hearing and thorough discussion of all perspectives on the full range of constitutional issues with a view to ensuring greater understanding of, if not agreement on, the positions of the participants.

This process resulted in considerable clarification and detailing of positions and rationales and led all participants to conclude that self-government continued to be the focal issue for the 1987 First Ministers' Conference. The challenge has continued to bridge the range of views which still exist on this issue.

The aboriginal associations continue to argue for recognition of an immediately enforceable right to aboriginal self-government. Some provinces are still not prepared to accept recognition of a right which is not free and fully defined. The federal Government has listened to the concern of the aboriginal associations and has reflected this in its proposals. We have attempted to meet the concerns of provinces by proposing an amendment which leaves the task of defining the right, in practical terms, to a political process rather than to the courts.

I would like to take a moment to review the Liberal record. Very briefly, what does the record show? For example, what was the Liberal Government's response to the parliamentary Special Committee on Indian Self-Government? Its response was Bill C-52, a legislative approach to accommodating self-government through delegated powers. Bill C-52 provided:

An Indian nation may not seek recognition unless:

The Indian nation meets the criteria established by regulation for eligibility for recognition.

Was this the recognition of an inherent right? No. In fact, the federal Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development indicated clearly in his response to the parliamentary report:

The Government, therefore, is prepared to acknowledge that effective movement toward self-government will require substantial restructuring of the current relationship between Indian people and the Government of Canada. Changes are clearly needed. However, it is important for us to recognize that any change in the relationship will affect not only the federal Government and Indian people but also provincial governments and others.

Because the effect of changes in the relationship are likely to be wide-ranging, long-lasting and profound, they cannot be undertaken lightly. Each step toward self-government must be carefully considered through joint consultation to ensure that progress is steady and sure.

The Government recognizes, as the committee has, that self-government can be furthered through non-constitutional as well as constitutional means. Indeed, if the principle of self-government were constitutionally entrenched tomorrow, the challenge of making self-government an effective and vital reality would remain. Effective government, as the Prime Minister said at the First Ministers Conference on the Constitution in March, 1983, will first be judged by how it impacts upon the daily lives of its constituents.

Does this, Madam Speaker, sound like a policy in support of a right immediately enforceable in the courts? It does not. It speaks of a Government treading very carefully into new territory. Subsequently, at the 1984 First Ministers' Conference the then Liberal Prime Minister put his proposal on the table. Did it call for an inherent right? No, Madam Speaker, it did not.

The approach underlying that proposal was a pragmatic approach to negotiating self-government agreements. Let me give you some examples of the Government's position. The then Prime Minister, speaking of the 1984 First Ministers' Conference, said:

I reject full independence or absolute sovereignty as a basis for aboriginal peoples relationship with any Government within our federation.

Mr. Trudeau went on to make his Government's position crystal clear. He said:

Interpretation of our Constitution and its application in various situations could be left to the courts. That will always be open to us in any event.

My own judgment, however, is that we should be looking at concepts and formulations which lead to political rather than legal solutions.

What does the present Government record show? We have gone far beyond the debate on whether aboriginal peoples should have a right to self-government and, unlike the Liberals, we have taken pains to make sure that we do not leave the provinces behind. Constitutional change is not a federal prerogative. It is a collaborative effort.

What we are discussing now, and have been for years, is not whether the right exists but how it should be exercised. In this, Governments seem to be clear. Any aboriginal Government must sit within the Canadian Confederation. Indeed, it was the Liberal Prime Minister who said:

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Aboriginal governments, in whatever form or model, will have to fit into the constitutional system. It should fit smoothly, comfortably and effectively. The complexity of jurisdictional issues is at once obvious and formidable. It can only be addressed through careful negotiations, based on full and frank expression of aims and needs and a determination to get a set of intergovernmental relationships that will work well for the benefit of all concerned.

Governments today continue to share that view and, as representatives of all Canadians, it is the elected politicians' responsibility to ensure a smooth transition from the status quo to new constitutional arrangements with aboriginal peoples. Whether the aboriginal peoples' right to self-government is already contained in Section 35 as an inherent right will ultimately be a question for the courts. Whatever the courts