

THE CONSTITUTION: Fight for rights continues

Indians, Metis reject 'sham' offer of rights

By Bruce Ward Toronto Star
OTTAWA — Justice Minister Jean

rights of the aboriginal peoples," Chretien said yesterday.

Native rights were dropped from the proposed constitution — at the insistence of some provinces — as part of the price of the Nov. 5 accord.

Chretien said he hopes the provinces will agree to reinstate the controversial section 34, but added that Ottawa will not make it binding without their consent. The section recognizes and affirms the aboriginal and treaty rights of Indians, Metis, and Inuit.

Del Riley, president of the Indian brotherhood, said he could not support any constitutional package "without full and proper entrenchment" of aboriginal and treaty rights.

"The government offer is a sham," Riley said.

Smokey Bruyere, president of the Metis council, dismissed Chretien's offer as "useless".

"What good is it to us?" he said. "Federal rights are fine for people on reserves because they come under federal jurisdiction."

The only positive response to the offer came from Tagak Curley, an MLA (Keewatin South) in the Northwest Territories and a spokesman for the Inuit committee.

"It's an important first step," Curley said. "The offer is definitely acceptable to our position. Of course, we'd like to see section 34 brought into the federal jurisdiction, and we're heading in the right direction."

Curley said several committee members would be in Ottawa on the weekend to "try to bring the National Indian Brotherhood on board."

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By David Vienneau To

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