

Meech Lake was a compromise



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In the last Queen's Park Report, I talked about the pressures that faced some of the first ministers during the recent constitutional discussions. They struggled to make their decisions during the last round of discussions on the Meech Lake accord knowing that political storms were brewing at home.

Just what kind of deal came out of that week of controversy and political pressure? As would be expected it was a compromise that could not completely please anyone. However, as is the usual nature of political compromises in this country it did not cause anyone to reject it completely.

The 'distinct society' clause was left unchanged. However, a legal opinion was attached as an appendix to the final communique of the conference which indicated that the application of the clause should not infringe on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that is contained in the Constitution.

The problem of Senate Reform which is particularly important in Western Canada has been named as the key constitutional priority until comprehensive reform has been achieved. The federal and provincial governments will constitute a commission which will hold wide ranging public hearings on the question of Senate reform. By this method the public will be provided with a forum to discuss constitutional amendments prior to their passage rather than after.

If the first ministers are unable to agree on a suitable package of Senate reforms by July 1, 1995, a redistribution of the present Senate seats will take place. This redistribution would see Ontario with 18; British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta with 8; and, the representation of the other provinces and territories remain-

ing unchanged.

Other issues were also discussed at the meeting in Ottawa. It was agreed that several issues were of such significance that it was essential to flag them now as future subjects for constitutional amendments. The question of the rights of women will be the subject of a future amendment which will clarify a section of the present constitution which is held to be ambiguous. It has been proposed that a section of the Charter of Rights should be moved into the body of the Constitution to ensure that there is no confusion about this issue.

The role of the territories and their ability to participate in future discussions will be clarified and their role in appointments to the Senate and Supreme Court will be more fully detailed. In addition, the manner by which the territories could become provinces will be discussed.

The requests by Canada's aboriginal peoples for recognition under the Constitution will be a subject at a first ministers' conference within one year of the final ratifications of the Meech Lake Accord. The first ministers will also undertake to ensure that representatives of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are invited to take part officially in any Constitutional discussions which might affect their status or involve their interests.

The first ministers were not successful in resolving all the problems. Some things were left to the future. What they did try to do was keep the process of change and growth going. Some of the compromises were a little lumpy but if they hold together we can still take another try at smoothing things out.

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Ballinafad W.I. goes on tour

By BETTY SOJKA

Ballinafad Correspondent

The Women's Institute recently spent a pleasant day touring the Campbellville area. This June outing was the ladies last meeting until September. Eleven members journeyed to Campbellville where they visited the Emporium and other craft stores. Here the women saw many wonderful items. Breaking for lunch at noon, the women enjoyed a lovely meal at a small lunch room.

After lunch with the day having some fine weather, the president called a short business meeting in

the open air. Mrs. Eleanor McLean gave a report of the recent district annual meeting she had attended as a delegate, and which had been held in Ashgrove. This was followed by several matters of business being covered. Mrs. Ada Kirkwood gave the motto "God gives us food but he doesn't throw it in the nest." The current events were given by Mrs. Eileen McEnery. In the afternoon the ladies travelled on to visit the Indian grounds at Crawford Lake. Here the ladies saw many Indian artifacts, and some enjoyed a nature walk.

Recently, Mrs. Eleanor McLean

and Mrs. Alma Sinclair represented the Women's Institute at the Ontario Agricultural Museum just above Milton. The ladies answered many questions about the Women's Institute that were asked by visitors to the Women's Institute Hall at the Museum.

The recent "Meet Your Neighbour Tea" was very disappointing to the U.C.W. There was clearly no response. A lot of effort had been made to make this tea successful, with the ladies providing coffee, tea and goodies.

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