

NAC
148

NAC
says



to this Constitutional Deal



Because...

- It takes back rights already won by women and minorities in the 1982 Constitution
- It provides no guarantee of equality for aboriginal women
- It threatens new *and* existing social programs vital to all Canadians
- It ignores demands for gender equity and minority representation in the Senate.

Aboriginal Women

- There is no guarantee of equality for women under aboriginal self-government.
- Discussion of equality for aboriginal women has been put off until a First Ministers' conference in 1996. Aboriginal women have no guarantees of participation in self-government negotiations between now and 1996.

Social programs

- Like the Meech Lake Agreement, this deal makes future shared-cost programs, like a national system of child care, a virtual impossibility. Provinces will be able to opt out of new shared-cost programs with compensation, resulting in a patchwork of programs across the country.

- Behind closed doors and at the last minute the First Ministers introduced an entirely new limitation on federal spending. This threatens new and *existing* social programs, including medicare and a future national program against male violence.
- First Ministers, not the federal Parliament, will set national objectives. These federal policies will have to respect provincial priorities, which could include extra-billing by doctors and user fees.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms

- The new Canada Clause strengthens the rights of governments at the expense of the rights of individuals and disadvantaged groups.
- The Canada Clause sets up a hierarchy of rights. As it currently reads, Canadians and their government are required to be committed to



minority language rights. Only Canadians are required to be committed to the rights of women and racial minorities. No one is required to be committed to the rights of disabled people, lesbians and gays.

- The Canada Clause amounts to a constitutional direction to the courts to interpret and balance rights differently than before 1982. This weakens the rights of women, minorities and particularly lesbians and gays, and people with disabilities.

Democratic Representation of Women and Minorities in a new Senate

- NAC has argued for a system of proportional representation designed to guarantee gender equality and minority representation. This position was endorsed by the constitutional conferences, the Beaudoin-Dobbie Report, and was on the table throughout the multi-lateral meetings of ministers responsible for the constitution.

- When the First Ministers got into the act in August, proportional representation with guarantees for women and minorities vanished from the constitutional table. The First Ministers felt no obligation to the consensus that had emerged from the constitutional conferences.

- Fair representation for women and minorities is now up to the discretion of provincial governments. While some provinces have promised gender equity, each government can decide how its senators can be elected or chosen. There are no guarantees of representation for women and minorities.

Women say YES to Equality.

Women say NO to a Bad Deal that can't be changed for the better.

On October 26 vote no to the First Ministers Deal

Women say YES to:

- a Canada in which the rights of women and minorities are promoted and in which social programs can promote economic and social equality.
- a Canada in which Aboriginal women, the women of Quebec — all women — participate equally in democratic political institutions.
- a Canada in which there is recognition of the inherent right of self-government of aboriginal people, including protection of the rights of Aboriginal women.
- a Canada in which the right of self-determination for Quebec is guaranteed. This means the right of the people of Quebec to choose freely their path of political and economic development, without threat of coercion or force.
- a Canada in which the federal government has the constitutional authority to initiate national social programs directed at overcoming inequality.