

Chiefs present Governor-General with a declaration on nationhood

OTTAWA (CP) — Representatives of thousands of **Indians** demanded self-government and self-determination yesterday then decided to at least postpone appearances at a parliamentary committee studying the **constitutional** changes the **Indians** strongly oppose.

Then, after an emotional three days, many headed for their homes across the country while others discussed whether to take **constitutional** grievances to the United Nations.

They were unable to agree on the makeup of an **Indian** government that would control their land and review their **constitutional** position.

Four hundred chiefs plus 500 other **Indians** approved a declaration of nationhood in a day of tense debate and then presented it to Gov.-Gen. Edward Schreyer.

"The creator has given us the right to govern ourselves and the right of self-determination," the declaration said. "The rights and responsibilities given to us by the Creator cannot be

altered or taken away by any other nation."

The **Indians** were in two groups: the 400 chiefs from most of the reserves in the country, and the about 500 persons who came here on the so-called Constitution **Express** train. Most of the latter are from British Columbia.

With about half their number heading off to catch planes, the chiefs' meeting voted to at least postpone and perhaps cancel appearances before the parliamentary committee.

Decision on whether to make a presentation will be made in January.

The **Indians** from the Constitution Train announced they will boycott the committee — which had invited them to testify — because they said it does not speak for Canada.

In a letter to the committee, distributed to the press, the representatives of the Constitution **Express** said: "The standing committee has no authority to make any decisions binding Canada."

It reiterated the **Indian** belief that there can be no patriation of the constitution from Britain until the **Indian** nations have concluded negotiations with the Canadian and British governments.

The declaration and the demand that the Governor-General appear before the meeting were approved at the end of an emotional debate.

The demand was forwarded to Mr. Schreyer, who already had agreed to receive a delegation, and he refused to comply.

The meeting voted again and decided to send a delegation headed by Del Riley, president of the National **Indian** Brotherhood.

There has been a strong feeling among some of the almost 1,000 **Indians** meeting here that no further attempts be made for **constitutional** change and that **Indians** should go before the United Nations to be treated as a nation.

Chief Wayne Christian of British Columbia said **Indian** nations have reaffirmed their legal relationship with Britain — "Canada is only the administrator and they've done a lousy job."

We the original peoples of this land know the Creator put us here.

The Creator gave us laws that govern all our relationships to live in harmony with nature and mankind.

The laws of the Creator defined our rights and responsibilities.

The Creator gave us our spiritual beliefs, our languages, our culture, and a place on Mother Earth which provided us with all our needs.

We have maintained our freedom, our languages, and our traditions from time immemorial.

We continue to exercise the rights and to fulfil the responsibilities and obligations given to us by the Creator for the lands upon which we were placed.

The Creator has given us the right to govern ourselves and the right to self-determination.

The rights and responsibilities given to us by the Creator cannot be altered or taken away by any other nation.

Declaration text

*Text of the declaration of nationhood approved by **Indian** chiefs yesterday:*

A Declaration of the First Nations.