

# ABORIGINAL COUNCIL LOOKS AT ITS POWER

*From PETER REES*

**CANBERRA. — The National Aboriginal Consultative Committee will change its constitution after Tuesday's criticism by the Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Senator Cavanagh.**

He told the NACC the proposed constitution would put too much power in the nine-man council of "ministers".

It is understood Senator Cavanagh warned the NACC that he would oppose the constitution in Cabinet, unless it reduced the power the executive would have.

As a result, the meeting agreed to set up a sub-committee to review the constitution.

The revised constitution, expected to be ready by the middle of the year, will ensure that power remains with the rank-and-file of the 41-member body.

It is believed that during the two-hour meeting, which was closed to the press, Senator Cavanagh criticised proposed controls on withdrawals from the NACC's bank accounts.

The draft constitution enabled withdrawals to be made on the signature of one "minister" counter-signed "by at least two other persons approved by the council."

## Honorary member

But another clause enabled the council to appoint a person who was not an elected NACC representative to be a member or an honorary member of the Council of Ministers.

Senator Cavanagh is believed to have told the meeting that this would mean that only one elected member need sign cheques.

After the meeting Senator Cavanagh said he did not think the present nine "ministers" had exercised power unjustly.

"But I think the constitution gives them too much power," he said.

However, he believed there should be some executive body within the NACC.

Senator Cavanagh said he had no objection to



• **Senator Cavanagh**

the NACC changing its name under the constitution to the National Aboriginal Congress.

He said he did not oppose the objects, powers and functions set out in the draft constitution.

He believed these laid down the NACC's aspirations.

The objects, which include the power to formulate and express national aboriginal policy, the control of natural resources on aboriginal land, and the right to raise or borrow money for the purpose of achieving its objects, extend beyond the original advisory role which the Government intended for the NACC.

Senator Cavanagh said there was unanimous agreement among NACC members in supporting his criticism of various aspects of the constitution.

He said he was happy with the way the two days of talks with the NACC had gone.

NACC members were full of praise for Senator Cavanagh.

The NACC president, Mr Stanley, of South Australia, said Senator Cavanagh's attitude to the NACC was different to when they had first met.