

"AN ACTIVE ROLE OR WE RESIGN"

By HUGH ELLIOT

The acting president of the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee, Mr Bruce McGuinness, says he would rather resign than have the committee continue in an advisory capacity.

Mr McGuinness told the Canberra News this today when he arrived in Canberra from Melbourne to meet the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Cavanagh, over the present dispute about the committee's name and function.

He added the 41 member committee would probably also want to resign.

The committee has changed its name to National Aboriginal Congress, and has stated that it wants an active role in Aboriginal affairs.

Senator Cavanagh has retorted that he considers the committee had no

authority to change its name, and that if it insists on retaining the change he may not have power to continue payments to the members.

These payments are \$6,000 a year salary and \$3,000 expenses.

Mr McGuinness said that he and two other members of the committee had arranged to discuss the matter with Senator

Cavanagh this afternoon.

The other members are the acting general secretary, Mr Phillip Hall and the presiding chairman, Mr Eddie Bennell.

Mr McGuinness said the appointment of the committee as an advisory body to the Government was a "sell out" of the Aboriginal people.

"We shall be completely ineffective in getting action

with Aboriginal affairs", he said "unless we become a statutory body".

He admitted that what the committee wanted might not be possible without an Act of Parliament.

REPORT

But the ideal was to be given authority to handle Aboriginal finances, make their own decisions and produce an annual report for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr McGuinness emphasised that the committee was anxious to discuss the matter freely with the Minister.

He said the committee had not taken legal advice about the validity of the Minister's threat to stop their salaries because of the change of name.

"NEWS"

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