

Founded by the Fund for the Republic, Inc.

# CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Santa Barbara, California

New York Office: 133 East 54th Street, N.Y. 22, N.Y. PL 3-1340

FOR RELEASE: A.M. NEWSPAPERS  
Thursday, March 16, 1961

Commission Asks  
New Policies for  
American Indian

WASHINGTON -- Recommendations for fundamental revisions in U.S. policy towards the American Indian were made today by a commission of leading citizens in a report released by the Fund for the Republic.

The 56-page report, a Program for Indian Citizens, is a summary of findings based on a four year study. The full report will be published later this year. It was prepared by the Commission on the Rights, Liberties and Responsibilities of the American Indian, established in 1957 by the Fund for the Republic.

(MORE)

The chairman of the Commission is Meredith O. Wilson, President of the University of Minnesota. Other members are W.W. Keeler, Executive Vice-President of the Phillips Petroleum Company, and a former chief of the Cherokee Nation, who is now consultant to the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs; Karl N. Llewellyn, Professor of Jurisprudence, University of Chicago; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Professor (Emeritus) History, Harvard University; and Charles Sprague, editor and publisher of the Salem, Oregon, Statesman. The Commission had two executive directors: William A. Brophy, a former commissioner of Indian Affairs, who served in 1957, and Dr. S. D. Aberle, who served from 1957-1961.

Single copies of A Program for Indian Citizens are available without charge by writing to the Commission, 424 First National Bank Building, Albuquerque, New Mexico; the Fund for the Republic's headquarters at Box 4068, Santa Barbara, California; or to the Fund's New York office at 133 East 54th Street.

The report examines seven major aspects of the Indian problem and makes recommendations dealing with termination, Indian values and attitudes, economic development, tribal governments and law and order, education, health, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

(MORE)

TERMINATION POLICY.

One of the Commission's major recommendations is a thorough re-examination of the federal government's policy of "termination", whereby it is proceeding to cancel various treaty obligations under which it has given special protection to the economic, social and educational welfare of the Indian citizen.

The report criticizes the hasty manner in which Concurrent Resolution 108, passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in 1953, has been implemented in order to carry out termination. It charges that termination as it is being applied threatens to bring about disruption of the Indian's tribal and legal systems, the forced sale and wasteful exploitation of Indian lands, inequitable taxation, and abandonment by the federal government of educational, medical and road building and other services without first establishing other sources of support for such services.

Termination has been carried out in many cases without knowledgeable consent of the Indian tribes affected, the report declares. It recommends that Indians participate fully in the working out of all termination agreements and that such participation should be made a "pre-requisite" to the acceptance by the Congress of any termination plans.

The report suggests that Indian tribes be afforded competent technical assistance, paid for when necessary by the government, to aid them in preparing for termination plans. Such plans should, among other things, adequately safeguard Indian water rights, conserve natural

(MORE)

resources, allow Indian tribes to incorporate for business purposes, permit Indian-held lands to remain tax-exempt until it is determined that the land can support taxation, and provide for adjustment of the Indian to a new political, social and economic environment.

"For the government to act out of a sense of frustration and of haste to rid itself of the vexing questions involved in administering Indian affairs is bound to ensure failure," the report declares.

"American policy, if it is to succeed, must aim at helping Indians to prepare themselves in advance of termination for self-reliant living in whatever is their prevailing social and economic framework. As this is accomplished, tribe by tribe, termination will follow and follow from the Indians' own desire. Termination so conceived will be an act of statesmanship in the best American tradition."

#### INDIAN VALUES AND ATTITUDES.

The report stresses that "an objective which should undergird all Indian policy is that the Indian individual, the Indian family, and the Indian community be motivated to participate in solving their own problems. The Indian must be given responsibility, must be afforded an opportunity he can utilize, and must develop faith in himself.

"Indian-made plans should receive preferential treatment, and when workable, should be adopted.

"Government programs would be more effective if plans for education, health and economic development drew on those parts of the Indian heritage which are important not only to the Indians but also to the cultural enrichment of modern America."

(MORE)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

A "grim and complex" economic future lies ahead for a large segment of American Indians whose reservations lack sufficient land or resources to provide a decent standard of living, the report declares. What land they do retain is being diminished by action of the federal government in withdrawing its trusteeship of Indian property and allowing it to be sold to individual private owners.

The report points out that reservations are often too isolated to allow establishment of industry, and yet when the Indian leaves the reservation to seek better jobs and wages, he is severely handicapped by a lack of education and training in skilled occupations.

To meet these and other economic problems of the Indian, the report recommends that the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs cooperate with the tribes in developing an economic planning program. The planners, drawn both from government and private sources, should make population analyses with a view to ascertaining employment possibilities. Planners should also seek ways of developing investment in land, resources, location and conduct of industry, service businesses and recreation areas.

If planning programs require more capital than available from Indian sources, the government should be prepared to make grants, short and long term loans, and loan guarantees to the tribes and to qualified Indians, the report states.

(MORE)

It declares that the efficient use of Indian land requires merging. In some regions, "to prevent disintegration of the land base, the tribe must obtain control of small tracts for re-assignment or rental to individuals in larger units."

The problem of Indian unemployment and substandard job levels could be dealt with in part by giving special instruction to untrained Indians, supplemented by education in management of money, the function of savings accounts, relative values of commodities, ways of locating city jobs and how to adjust to city living.

"Priority should be placed on finding jobs for tribesmen near the reservations. When they secure positions far away from their homes, guidance and financial help should be made available to them until they become adjusted to their new environment, and an effort made to locate them in neighboring living quarters."

The report stresses the importance of maintaining field employment offices for the Indians, and of systematic development of industrial employment opportunities on or near the reservations. It also emphasizes the desirability of preserving the practice of Indian arts and crafts.

The report recommends that, "like other Americans, Indians should be eligible to participate in the national economic improvements which are not administered by the Secretary of the Interior, such as programs for depressed areas, housing developments, small business and the like."

(MORE)

TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS AND LAW AND ORDER.

"The national policy, which for more than a century and a half has authorized the maintenance of tribal governments should be continued," the report states. "They should be dispensed with only when a tribe so desires. Until then the authority of these governments in local affairs should not be curtailed through unilateral action of the United States except in one respect: Federal law should require that tribal actions safeguard certain basic civil rights and provide for appeal of civil rights cases to Federal and State courts.

"By thus governing themselves, Indians will among other things gain knowledge of and experience in the laws and procedures of the greater community. When it is to their advantage, they should adopt the good features of these other governments. The costs of tribal government should be met, when feasible, by an equitable system of taxation of the members and others rather than exclusively from the collective tribal resources."

EDUCATION.

The report says that present "low levels of achievement among Indian children present a situation that will take time, even under the most favorable conditions, to correct."

While Indian children have a mental capacity equal to that of white children, they are too frequently handicapped by poverty, inadequate educational facilities, a lack of parental understanding of the importance of education, and by a confused cultural background.

(MORE)

The report recommends expansion of adult education programs, as well as provision of government financial aid to Indian education when tribal resources are insufficient. Public schools attended by Indian children should have programs designed to meet their special needs, and under no circumstances should such schools allow their educational standards to decline.

"Only if greater progress is made in the future than in the past and if programs of education for Indian children at each stage of their acculturation are developed and swiftly put into effect can many of today's pupils be saved from becoming problem children, unable to cope with life."

#### HEALTH.

The report says that, although the record of the U.S. Public Health Service has been "excellent," the Indian health problem remains a serious one.

Substandard housing, inadequate sanitary facilities, contaminated water, frequently scanty medical services, and ignorance of how to seek and use professional care all contribute to the bad health situation, the report declares.

The average Indian life span is 40 years as compared with the national average of 62. Certain tribes are badly afflicted with illnesses due to microbes, while in others obesity, alcoholism, diabetes and hypertension are relatively common. Dental diseases also abound. The worst sufferers from poor health are infants and children, whose death rate is twice the national average.

(MORE)



The report suggests that the Public Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs work more closely in attacking the Indian health problem. An example of how the agencies sometimes work at cross purposes is that on occasion the Bureau encourages Indians to leave the reservation while the Public Health Service will not give medical aid to Indians living off the reservations.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS.

The report recommends continuation, for the present, of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but suggests that it be supplemented by an Indian Advisory Board of distinguished citizens appointed by the President to report to him at regular intervals on the state of the tribes.

"The primary function of the Bureau should be an affirmative one: always to counsel and assist the Indian, not to control or regiment him. It should offer him technical advice and other help in the initiation and execution of plans for developing and managing his natural resources, for expanding his economic opportunities, for operating his government, and for bettering his living conditions. To this end, the Bureau should create a special division staffed with competent economists, planners, and community analysts. "

The report also calls for repeal of outdated legislation and revision of statutes, regulations, procedures, tribal constitutions and corporate charters affecting the conduct of Indian affairs -- so as to simplify administration and permit Indians to make their own, unsupervised decisions over a greater number of subjects than is now allowed.

(MORE)

"The Bureau's aim should be to let Indians conduct their own affairs as soon as possible without supervision. Accordingly, it should encourage their assumption of responsibilities for different functions on a piecemeal basis. Tribal land and resources should, however, remain under the Federal trust until the Indians, when able to hold and manage their property, decide otherwise."

The report declares that "under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 the Secretary of the Interior is required to inform tribes falling under the law as to the appropriations he will request for their projects before he submits estimates to the Bureau of the Budget. This principle of prior tribal review, now frequently ignored by the Bureau, should be enforced and extended to all tribes.

"Finally, the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs should speak consistently in announcing policies. Conflicts between the policies proclaimed by the Secretary and those executed by the Bureau should never occur."

#####