

1212 N. 32nd Ave.

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July 24, 1954

Hon. Warren G. Magnuson,  
United States Senate,  
Washington, 25, D.C.

Dear Senator Magnuson:

Thank you sincerely for your interest in the Wanapum Band of Priest Rapids Indians, and for forwarding me information relating to the situation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs regarding these abandoned people.

I do not see that anything can be done at this time for the Wanapums, inasmuch as according to my previous explanation, the claims of the Yakima Tribe for reimbursement for land occupied by the Wanapums, is one of the pending claims before the Indian Claims Commission.

I explained that I did not wish to prejudice the claim in any way. When a decision has been reached, it may clear the way for more definite action.

I have testified for the Department of Justice in opposition to the Yakima claims. In event that this section is thrown out of the Ceded Lands Case, that would leave the Wanapums with a very valid claim to property including the Priest Rapids Dam site. But just so the matter is straight in your mind, the Wanapums would ask only for a fair adjustment of their rights, and that would not be an excessive payment. They would continue to ask for a home along the river in the land of their ancestors, to perpetuate their culture, the last pure culture of any Northwest tribes, to my knowledge.

The Wanapums are poor people. They have not resorted to an attorney and do not intend to do so. There is no danger to fear action on their part. And I have testified that I profit in no way in this connection.

I am available to resume my testimony, for the government if called upon to do so, and my friends, the Yakimas, know I will testify honestly. By their religion, dialect, folk lore and many other ways, the Wanapums can be proven separate people. It can also be proven that Kamiakin nor none of the Yakima chiefs did not speak for these people, who were not represented at the Treaty Council of Walla Walla in 1855.

I mention these things now, for your records, in event it becomes necessary, after the claims are settled to pursue the Wanapum cause against the opposition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I suspect that in the final analysis relief for them can be obtained in one of two ways, Legislative action, setting aside a home for them, or a Presidential proclamation effecting the same result. And at the proper time public sentiment will favor this, I am sure.



It is true the Yakimas, after many years and in order to secure or attempt to secure for themselves a larger territory to include in their ceded land claims, did invite the Wanapums to enroll. Most of the ancestors of these people intermarried with the various tribes making up the Yakima Nation. Even among the remnant Wanapums, there are those who are married to Yakima or Warm Spring enrolled women.

But, attempts to gain allotments by some of these people, in former years, were rejected by the Yakimas. And if they are construed members of that nation by treaty, then most surely they are entitled to allotment as well as enrollment.

Moreover, these people chose to live outside of the reservation, making their own way in life. And that, unless I have been misled, is the very thing the Bureau of Indian Affairs is encouraging Indians not only of the Yakima Tribe, but over the entire United States, wherever reservations exist, to do.

So, I believe you will agree that the proper thing to do at this time is to await developments, let the claims be cleared and adjusted, and see the attitude taken toward these people by whatever agency is granted a permit by the Federal Power Commission. There appears many complications ahead, but I believe they will straighten out, since these people are fair and honest.

Thank you again for your courtesyy and assistance.

I am enclosing a clipping to go with your file in this matter, and as development occur, there will be other clippings, or letters, for your reference. And it may be possible that when you return home, I may be granted an interview to go more completely into this matter, looking forward to your assistance and cooperation at the proper time. That I am sure, is not now.

Sincerely Yours

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