

1212 N. 32nd Ave.
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July 29, 1954

Mr. Eagle Seelatsee, chairman
Mr. Alex Saluskin, secretary
Yakima Tribal Council,
Toppenish, Washington.

Dear Friends:

As you and others know, I have at times mentioned that I am interested, as a citizen and newspaperman, in encouraging members of the Yakima Tribe --a tribe of over 4,000 members--to register and vote.

Please understand that this matter has originated solely with me and I am perfectly willing to accept any criticism that may attend thereto.

I have made numerous inquiries in an attempt to determine facts and the I present.

1-Mr. Harold Purdin, county auditor, or Walter Wayne, deputy auditor, whose duty it is as elective officers to keep registration and voting records and expedite them, would be glad at any time, to confer with a committee from the tribe. They would explain fully any questions that might be asked.

2-They tell me that while there are registration clerks appointed at various convenient places in cities on the reservation, they would, at your request, appoint special registration clerks from the tribe. These would be available at the agency or throughout the reservation during a concentrated period in which publicity to the project would be given. Clerks are paid by the county 15 cents for each person registered.

3-I have secured a list of the present clerks, which you may wish to post at the agency office for the benefit of those calling there. And I am publicizing it in the paper as a public service. While I realize it is rather late to meet the deadline for the primary, there is the general election, this fall, to look forward to.

Of course, to be eligible for registration and voting, a person must be of legal age, capable of reading, writing and speaking the English language (exception blind person). The other details could be better explained by those in the auditor's office, and they are most agreeable to being of service to you.

In event a decision is reached through committee and approval of the Tribal Council to go all out on registration and voting, you may rest assured of my fullest cooperation, at the extending of my own time for speaking etc. to serve you. And of course this includes stories in the newspaper, to show what is being done. I would also make suitable contacts for you with the radio stations.

My research into this matter has brought out the following facts,

with which you no doubt are familiar, but which are repeated:

"... in regard to the letter received from the Secretary of the Interior May 12th [1938] referring to an opinion by Acting Solicitor for the Department of the Interior dated January 26, 1938.

"In answer to the same, I will say that we have carefully examined the letters and find that this office, since 1916 has ruled that the Indians are entitled to vote, upon the following authorities:

"The Fifteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution provides:

"-The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States, or by any state, on account of race, color, or previous condition servitude."

"The act of Congress, dated June 2, 1924 (Chapter 233 43 Stat. 253 U.S. Code, Title 8, Sec. 3) provides:

"All Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States are declared to be citizens of the United States. The granting of citizenship to Indians shall not in any manner affect the right of any Indian to tribal or other property."

Article VI, Section 2 of the United States Constitution provides:

"This constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the constitution or laws of any state to the contrary notwithstanding.

We also are of the opinion that the Washington law which would exclude Indians not taxed from voting is unconstitutional. In other words, it is our opinion that the Indians are entitled to vote regardless of the State's constitutional law. This has been the ruling of this office for several years and has been so ruled by the present attorney general on April 1, 1936." [end quotes]

I feel that I may present this letter to the Council because I have no axes to grind and no politicians to support. The man I support, with my vote, is the man who serves the people and does the job for which he is elected. When he fails to do so, my vote goes to a person in whom I have confidence.

My vote is just one. The vote of your people represents many ballots. It represents one of the greatest rights the American people possess as compared with limited rights of some foreign nations.

While it may require years to get this idea over, that voting is an essential of good government, it is not too late to start now, realizing that the end will be worthwhile.

I am enclosing some printed material I obtained through the kindness of the Secretary of State relative to our government, that you may find of interest. He will be glad to provide additional material covering this and election procedures.

Please feel free to call upon me if I can be of any service whatsoever to you in helping more directly in this important matter. Good government is everybody's business, your business as well as mine.

A copy of this letter is enclosed in event you see fit to pass it on to your attorney, Mr. Paul M. Neibell, your friends or anyone you believe is interested

Thank you for the courtesy of your time in reading this long letter. Length was necessary, but to me, it is an important matter, and I feverently hope you will see it the same way. And that on your various trips you will see that it spreads far and wide in this state and elsewhere.

Sincerely yours

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1212 N. 22d ave.

(City Editor: The Yakima Daily Republic)

[Enclosure. 29 Jul 54]

State Primary September 14, 1954

State General Election: November 2, 1954

[Deadline for registering for the primary, August 13 , unless registration place is closed on Saturday. Books will then reopen for registration for the General Election, closing about Oct. 1st]

REGISTRATION CLERKS AVAILABLE ON RESERVATION AND IN PROXIMITY THERETO

Toppenish---Aleta Bennett, city clerk.

White Swan----Egberg Ward, at store.

Wapato----Tim McAulliffe, city clerk.

Harrah--Josephine Steele, city clerk.

Sunnyside-Marvin Listoe, at city hall.

Grandview--F.D. Gano, at city hall.

Zillah--City Clerk Daley.

Granger-James N. Bell, at drug store.