

1212 N. 32nd Ave.

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Senator Henry M. Jackson,
Senate Building,
Washington, D.C.

May 23, 1954

Dear Senator Jackson:

Now that the Priest Rapids enabling legislation seems to be making suitable progress, I thought it appropriate to write to you inquiring as to what protection the bill provides for the Wanapum band of Priest Rapids Indians.

I have had correspondence with Congressman Hal Holmes of this district regarding these people in months and years past, and have also written him, telling him that I am also writing to you. I have also addressed a letter in similar terms to the Senior Senator.

These Wanapum Indians, contrary to the common practice of Indians fortified by tribal attorneys, have a different psychology regarding life. They do not believe that the world owes them a living. But they do believe they are entitled to a small bit of land that was occupied by their ancestors when Lewis and Clark came into the country; land where their religion was re-born of which it is still a part and has persisted even to this day. And they continue to disclaim any affiliation with the cognate Yakimas.

We have gone the rounds of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, etc. and I have finally reached the conclusion that the only way something can be done for the Wanapums is through legislation or Presidential Proclamation, unless the bill itself provides full and adequate protection.

The Wanapums do not appear to wish to oppose progress along their section of the river, but they now ask me what is to become of them when the dam is built. That is a fair question.

While I am open to suggestion, I feel that it is wise at this time to inquire as the welfare of the Wanapums. I admit I am compelled to feel this way because of the manner in which Indian rights have frequently been overlooked.

Inasmuch as the government possesses vast landholdings now on all sides of the Priest Rapids Dam site, I do not feel it impossible that provision can be made for their future, since they are now a nearly exterminated race. There are eight of them left, maybe a few more who have never enrolled upon a reservation. Lewis and Clark estimated them at 2,000 to 3,000. A short distance from their last home the Bureau of Wildlife is seeking to acquire 32,000 acres of land for a game refuge. This was Wanapum land (Crab Creek). Yet the same government ignores the perpetuation as long as possible, of a historic human race.

I do not feel it necessary to wait until ground is broken, the relics of this historic race are misappropriated by sub-agencies of federal and state government having no just claim on them, and until these people are evicted from the place upon which they have resided years beyond knowledge.

These people's just claims to their home along the river will become more evident, I trust, with continuation of the Indian Claims. The Yakima Nation Ceded Lands claim very directly brings these people into the picture, and I myself have testified at a hearing relating thereto before Commissioner O'Marr. But I do not wish to jeopardize in any way this hearing, and wish to remain friends with the Yakimas, which I have done although I opposed them at the hearing as an expert ethno-historian for the Department of Justice.

So the Wanapums have not yet gained recognition from the government which they refused to fight during the Indian Wars of 1855-58. Now I feel that the time for legislation providing for them a small bit of their ancestral land, would be after successful passage of the Priest Rapids Dam Bill, and completion of the claims hearings. The hearings, I believe, will be completed this fall.

In relation to pursuing the case of these friendless people I have written a manuscript, Drummers and Dreamers of Priest Rapids. A clipping pertaining thereto is enclosed as also is another clipping in which you may be interested.

Aside from the case of the Wanapums, the situation of the non-reservation Wyampums, residing near Celilo, is similar to that of the Wanapums far up the river. And the Wyampums are more numerous than the Wanapums. That is a situation I certainly think the Oregon delegation would wish to join Washington in correcting, especially as completion of The Dalles Dam nears.

I am hopeful you may feel like commenting on the Wanapum situation and their future security, and join Congressman Holmes and (or) Senator Magnuson, in event legislative action or Presidential Proclamation may be evolved.

Sincerely Yours

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