

Oroville, Wash.

July 23, 1963

Open letter to

Honorable Walt Horan
House Office Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Horan:

It was with disappointment we read your "new" Colville Reservation termination bill, H. R. 7166, only to discover it is a reprint of your old bill, 8469, which we had vigorously protested.

The only changes you made in your bill are minor ones suggested by the Indian Bureau. Not one change was made at the request of the Indian people whose lives and property are to be effected. Not one change was made as a result of the on-the-spot study and recommendations of the Oroville Chamber of Commerce. It makes us wonder whom you are representing in Congress - the people of the Fifth District or the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Let us tell you a little about this Bureau whose recommendations you value above those of your own constituents:

In 1947 the Senate Civil Service Committee required the Indian Bureau to present a plan for terminating Federal supervision over all Indians within a period of ten years. The Bureau presented such a plan, never intending to carry it out.

The year the Bureau presented this plan for its own liquidation it had an appropriation from tax money of less than \$40 million. In 1961, fourteen years later, its appropriation was almost \$200 million. Now it's far above \$200 million and the Bureau is asking for an additional \$14.4 million for this next year.

In 1933 the Bureau had about 5,000 employees. In 1961 it had 17,000 - considerably more than three times as many Bureau employees though fewer Indians were left on reservations.

This Bureau now has unlimited control over 12½ million acres of land held in trust for Indian tribes. This, according to a pamphlet put out by the Bureau, is equivalent to the combined acres of all six New England states plus New Jersey and Maryland.

Not one acre of this land can be sold by the Indian owners or taken out from under Bureau control without the consent of the Bureau or a mandate from Congress.

The Bureau holds in trust and taxpayers pay for supervision of millions of acres of land belonging to people entirely capable of handling their own affairs. This is carried to such a ridiculous extreme that the estate of the Vice President of the United States Curtis was settled by the Indian Bureau.

This throws some light on the Bureau's reluctance to release Colville property even though 75 percent of the owners of the land have left the reservation.

Congressman Berry of South Dakota said, "In my office I have about 200 files where Indian landowners, most of whom are competent, have been trying for years to get a patent to their land or sell their land so they can get some benefit from it."

And he was speaking just about Indians in South Dakota.

Colvilles, too, want to get control of their own property. Our records show that a Colville arranged to lease his 160 acres to a white man for \$300 per year. They went to the agency to have the lease drawn up and were told, "You can't lease your land for dry farming. We've classified it as grazing land. You can have ten cents an acre."

A Colville woman who lives out of this state was offered \$15,000 for her land by a white man. She applied for a patent so she could sell. Even though she was a registered nurse her patent was denied on the grounds she was not competent to handle her own affairs.

Indian people know what this means. They say, "To stay in business the Indian Bureau has to have Indians." And this Bureau with the help of dupes in Congress is not only staying in business, it's growing like a cancer in spite of its fake plan for its own termination.

When any government enforces a communal status of land and collects and withholds income from private property against the wishes of capable property owners, that isn't democracy. It's communism whether it happens in our country or in Russia.

In the last five years, with Bureau connivance, but without the consent of the Indian people, more than \$450,000 of tribal money has been used to buy land to add to Colville communal holdings on a reservation which Congress, seven years ago, ordered terminated. This money could and should have been distributed to the Indian people no of whom need it. Do you wonder that Okanogan County has been declared economical depressed?

Surely you must know that the highhanded Tribal Council does not represent the Indian people when elections end with more ballots accounted for than were officially printed. There have been so many voting irregularities that hundreds of Colvilles now refuse to vote.

The Council learned long ago it pays to play ball with the Bureau. It paid in 1962 when the Bureau turned \$542,000 of tribal money over to them. In using tribal funds many plums fall to Council members, their relatives and close friends. In the last three years Council members have spent over \$75,000 of tribal money just for traveling. This is in addition to mileage, per diem and other generous fees allowed Council members for meetings and trips about the reservation. The Council has not favored killing the goose that lays these golden eggs.

You asked for our views on H. R. 7166. We sent you an analysis of that same bill last March before you reintroduced it. We are enclosing a copy of our letter. Your bill hasn't changed and neither has our opinion of it.

We feel as Joshua did many centuries ago when he advised the Israelites, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Is it to be the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington D. C. or the Indian people in your own Fifth District?

We invite you to join us on the side of the Indian people.

Very Sincerely,

Ruth Scofield, Chairman
Indian Affairs Committee
Oroville Chamber of Commerce