

ADDRESS OF FRANK GEORGE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND FIRST
VICE PRESIDENT, NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS,
AT MEETING OF THE AFFILIATED TRIBES OF NORTHWEST
INDIANS, SPOKANE, WASHINGTON, AUGUST 21, 1952.

Delegates to this fine conference of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest
Indians and friends:

It is indeed a great pleasure to return to the Northwest; to my
favorite city, Spokane, which takes a back seat to no one when it comes to
extending the hand of welcome and friendship to all.

As a member of your organization, it please^s me immensely to see so
many of you here and I know the personal sacrifices you must make to attend a
meeting such as this one. I am certain that the discussions at this meeting will
be highly informative and inspiring.

I wish to pay tribute to our popular president of the Affiliated Tribes
Joe Garry and all the others who had a part in arranging for this meeting.

Before continuing, I wish to extend to you the friendliest of greetings
from the National Congress of American Indians; our president, N. B. Johnson,
who serves as Associate Justice on the Oklahoma State Supreme Court; and from
our Executive Council of the National Congress of American Indians, who wish you
a most successful meeting.

The Chairman of the Governors' Interstate Council on Indian Affairs,
Alva A. Simpson, Jr., a fine fellow and a great friend of the Indian people, aske
me last week at Santa Fe, New Mexico, to present his ^rcodial greetings to the
Indians of the Pacific Northwest.

I also bring you the warmest of greetings from a person it was my
privilege to visit last week in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is a former
superintendent of the Colville Indian Agency and during his superintendency
there he became a very good friend of all the Indians in the area that makes up

the body of our organization. He is now area director of the Albuquerque Area and he is doing a fine job down there. He still follows the fortunes of all of us and he wishes you a bright and satisfactory future. He is none other than that great friend of yours and mine--Charles L. Graves. If the Bureau of Indian Affairs was staffed by more persons who had the qualities that Mr. Graves possesses and personifies, Indianhood would more rapidly be facing a brighter future here in the Northwest and elsewhere.

There is much gratitude within all of us when we rejoice that your fine organization has continued to grow. It is also gratifying to me that you took early recognition in the desirable need of joining forces on issues confronting Indianhood.

We face many mutual problems but it is not so mutual to the point that non-Indians and especially the lawmakers can put us in a single mold and treat us in one stereotype.

We will also find it expedient and desirable to enlist the aid of others to wage the fight against intolerance because of the patterns of social actions against one minority are frequently repeated against another minority.

I live for the day when the kindness of heart in the predominant race of this country will change so that Indians may enjoy the same comforts and services as others.

The fine characteristic that has made the American Indian what he is in American history are still what he is destined for in the future when we work toward opening the door of opportunity to a greater extent to every Indian family to move toward a better day in life.

We want to break down the barriers of bigotry, pessimism and discrimination if we are to assure dignity to every human personality. It is very important that there be a deep reverence for every human life. We must have this

in order to assure the coming generations of a better way of life. For our young people, there is nothing too good for their lives.

More important than material resources, more important than natural resources are our human resources. It is the people that make a commonwealth. It is the people who turn the wheels of industries. Human beings stand between us and the kind of life we shall lead. It is people who determine what kind of a community we shall have, and what kind of programs we are going to have.

This conference is concerned with people, decent first-grade American citizens who haven't always been accorded the opportunity and chances that they should have had to make their way of life.

We Indians are not asking for miracles. We are not asking for more than we are entitled to. We are not asking for handouts. We are asking for self-respect and every citizen in this country should have some self-respect and a high regard for this great country of ours. The American Indians want an opportunity to express themselves and they have not always been given the opportunity to express their convictions.

If this conference will accomplish nothing more than to convince the people of this country that the Indians want an opportunity to express themselves and have a part in the shaping out of their destinies, this meeting will be a success. However, there are many other things that must be done and that is why we are here.

The welfare of our people is not moving ahead as fast as it should but we should not show too much impatience. It is true that there has been too much apathy. There has been too much indifference. So many other things are involved. When we have gone through the episodes of events as has taken place in the past century and a half, it is not easy to overcome traditionary forces but we must not become discouraged. We are seeing progress today which should work out in

our favor. We need bold imaginative thinking in this constantly changing world.

Never in the world has it been more important for people of different dialects to come together and work toward a common objective at a time when a feeling of unrest exists all over the world. It is important that we have an organization of Indians to study the problems from every angle and that is what we in the National Congress of American Indians are endeavoring to do. We can then go to our legislative body and ask for changes that are desirable and needed to change the old philosophy of paternalism. We want to give you encouragement today even though there have been many times when you have felt disillusioned and felt that it was not worth while. We want you to know it is worth while. Many Americans are awakening to the responsibilities of the federal government and its obligations, both legal and moral, to the American Indians. They now know that this problem that confronts us is tied inexorably into the very thing that we are fighting for on a global scale today. If this government does not do justice to the American Indians, it does not deserve to be the leader of the nations of the world and it is very important if this country is to set the right example. It is very important if this country is going to convince other nations whose citizens have dark skins like ours that this country means what it says and that it is sincere about it and that it is going to practice what it preaches.

Our economic and social progress is very dependent upon the free exchange of ideas between individuals.

In this field of human relations we must strive to attain our objectives. Our creative efforts with the qualities within us will bring about those goals and it is not within the realm of anyone else to do the job better than the people themselves if they are given a free hand to practice self-determination which at times has been retarded by laws and regulations which are

not of our making or devising. To attain our objectives, let us not forget that we must have a unity of effort, a unity of thinking and an atmosphere of harmony.

We must forget past tribal differences, our mercenary feelings and all other things that bring about disunity.

All this must be done in order to utilize fully the opportunity to serve the aspirations of Indians everywhere to find the means to a better life.

Together, through teamwork, we can do the job. We shall contribute our efforts as individuals to the stability and progress of Indianhood.

We all have a personal economic interest in the future of the Indian race.

This activity must also be predicated on the philosophy that the rights of the weakest in our race will be given proper recognition. The rights of the weakest are as sacred as the rights of the strongest among us.

We must also reconcile ourselves to the fact that men's minds are not changed merely by passing laws. Most of our problems will be solved through normal adjustment and not through so-called acculturation by law as has been attempted by the discriminatory "emancipation" measures introduced in the Congress of the United States.

By dedicating our lives, our talents and ideas in the cause of Indianhood, we can go far knowing that together we can attain the goals of each Indian which are unattainable by the individual Indian alone.

Our goal, of course, is the common good and wellbeing of Indianhood.

The policy to achieve our goals must be carried out every day and it must have the daily trust and confidence of each individual so that each can see clearly that he is moving toward the goal he is yearning to reach. We must have strong leadership worked out through a stronger tie among the people of our race who are scattered throughout the United States and Alaska.

Our planning must command respect, loyalty and energy.

We must provide the feeling that each is leading his life fully and freely and that the planning is under the leadership he admires and respects. Through this process, we will grow and develop materially and spiritually.

Our work in human relations must be based on understanding. We want freedom of choice in many fields. We must continue for the education of our people. We must not continue to allow our concepts of imagination, our character development, our qualities, and our depth of understanding to become diluted by those who want to perpetuate the sad state of paternalism that has been associated with Indian administration for over a century. We have many well-meaning people in the Bureau of Indian Affairs but we have enough of the other to the point that Indian initiative is seriously stifled by the "know-it-all" people.

We want to have the right to go our way the way we think we want to go. We want recognition as thinking human beings. We want to have the opportunity to freely exchange our experiences with other human beings on all subjects of human interest.

It is our will as human beings to see that all grievances which arise are promptly and justly handled.

We want recognition and credit for what we do and what we want to do.

We look for all encouraging environments in which we can have better opportunities on this earth.

We want to hold the land that was held sacred by the grand people who are no longer with us and who had a sincere and relentless desire to enjoy the things Nature provided for the first human inhabitants of this great continent.

Millions of people have found a new life here. They came here as displaced and perhaps as dissatisfied people from other lands.

Yet, here within this country that was once all Indian-owned, we have "displaced" people. Last month, I traveled through the Indian country in the Missouri river basin area. Dams across this great river will soon inundate the lands of the Sioux Nation. It is also affecting the Three Affiliated Tribes of North Dakota. It will affect the Lower Brule Sioux, the Crow Creek Sioux, the Cheyenne River Sioux and the Standing Rock Sioux. They are going to lose the bottom lands where they have been able to grow crops under more desirable conditions than the dry arid lands in the higher country. They are also going to lose the source of fuel that has been theirs for unknown generations. The trees along the Missouri River have furnished the fuel for the council fires of the people who have lived on the banks of this stream. It still serves as a source of fuel for the homes of the people in the Dakotas and it represents a serious loss to them and forces a change that they would rather not have, but the march of progress dictates that these changes shall be made. In the Columbia River Basin, we are to soon witness the loss of the last of the many great fisheries that our people looked upon as something that would be theirs for all time to come.

The national expansion of the United States, with its westward-moving frontier, contains and nearly obscures the story of Indian land loss and Indian land wastage, along with the story of even more tragic destruction of Indians and Indian life. The American Indians have never entirely recovered from the period of infamy during which outright expropriation was the practice and the aboriginal people were either shoved aside or tread under foot.

Of the land remaining in Indian ownership, about one-fourth of it is located in regions having ten inches or less of annual rainfall. These lands are all that remain of the reservations that were established for the exclusive use of the Indians. These reservations were created or established only to be diminished or put out of existence.

We all know what happened as a result of the Acts of Congress like the Allotment Act of 1887 and the others that followed until about 1929 when conditions changed so that the practice of maladministration for the benefit of certain interests were stopped.

Today, the land base is inadequate for our people. The future of the American Indian specifically depends upon the fate of his remaining land. We must be vigilant and see that the practice of giving away Indian lands and possessions is never again resumed.

We must break down the discriminatory riders on Interior Department appropriation bills that prohibit the use of tribal funds for the acquisition of land and water rights within certain states. It is difficult to reach our goals if we must constantly be hampered by legislation prohibiting the use of tribal funds for self-help programs.

The Indian population today clearly indicates that the population growth is outstripping the development of opportunities for gainful employment and that unless sound development programs are continued on a more vigorous rate, the situation will become more critical.

The Navajo problem is a good example. In 1868 they numbered some 7,500. Today they number well over 70,000. Yet, the land base has not increased during that same period. It does not require unusual intelligence to conclude that the progress of the Indian must be given every encouragement. The present state of development, use, and ownership distribution, the Indian-owned lands are insufficient in quantity and quality to enable the Indian owners to derive from them a livelihood comparable to that of their rural white neighbors. A good tribal program of land consolidation will go far toward improving the economic conditions of the Indians. The rate of Indian progress has been slow. We all know that. We also know that the Government effort to help Indians should

not be reduced. That effort is being reduced by prohibiting use of tribal funds for land purchase.

We must be careful to project plans that call for the inevitable termination of federal supervision, yet our plans must be such that will not "emancipate" us out of our real estate. Let us not alienate our lands. Let us take a closer look at the "emancipation" bills that are aimed at the eventual separation of the Indian from his land. We must defeat that ulterior motive, and we will if we all stick together. We will have Indian people living in this country for a long time to come. We ^{owe} ~~se~~ it to the coming generations that we take careful deliberation so that we can guarantee that their heritage will be preserved and the land and all other related resources shall not be dissipated into oblivion by the present generation; that the children of the generations still unborn shall not become a landless group. We should assure them a more secure economic future so that they will never become public charges in any community. Let us show the world that we have the mental capacity to plan for tomorrow and the days to follow. We should build up the property of the Indians instead of taking more away from them.

The Federal government has jurisdiction over Indians on reservations on the constitutional basis that Congress has control over commerce with Indian tribes. The body of law built on that base developed according to the principle that the government owes protection to Indians in their relations with non-Indians and it should continue to be the law.

We as Indians have not had an adequate opportunity to advance our common wellbeing and as long as the right of self-determination is kept out of our reach a serious problem in human relations is going to continue to exist. Many of our people seek a gradual lessening of the controls over them whereby they will be given an opportunity to develop their initiative and exercise the

qualities within them to accept added responsibilities.

It is the general belief of the various tribal groups that the government should get out of the Indian business on a sliding scale rather than an abrupt lifting of supervision. There must be a transition period during which the Indian would have time to prepare himself for the future. In carrying out the aims for the purpose of eventually having the Indians attain their objectives, there is a need for the development of a program for the readjustment of the administration of Indian affairs more in keeping with the needs of the Indian rather than the need of the institutional pattern that has been in vogue within the structure of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In formulating such a program, it will be necessary for the states to cooperate with the Federal government, the Indian tribes and the various non-Indian organizations who are interested in the general welfare of Indians in order to get their views and aid in the formulation of a worthwhile program.

There is a need for reservation plans based on complete surveys of all resources above and below the ground, including water resources, and plans should be developed to obtain maximum family subsistence from the resources. These are all a part of the rehabilitation plans that have been before the Congress and apply to the Papagos of Arizona, and the Sioux tribes of the Dakotas to name just a few.

Investigations should be conducted and plans prepared for the best possible utilization of the Indian lands lying within the major river drainage basins. The landtaking so far has seriously affected the economic welfare of the Indians in the Missouri River Basin as has been pointed out before. We have also already stated that the Indians in the Columbia River Basin area will be seriously affected with the taking of their fisheries that has been theirs since time immemorial.

Adequate timber reconnaissances should be carried out on Indian forest lands in order to assure of a sustained-yield type of forest management.

A national policy should be adopted with respect to the taking of Indian lands for public purposes.

General legislation should be enacted into law to provide for the restoration to tribal ownership all Indian lands formerly thrown open for public entry. It is generally agreed that the Indians have a greater need for these lands and their economy would be seriously jeopardized if the lands continue in the clouded status that exists over certain reservation lands in the Western states.

A definite need still exists for the continuation of the guarantee of the United States that the Indians would have continuous possession of their remaining lands along with their right to effectuate self-government.

Adult education, recreation and social activities should be encouraged and promoted among the Indian people.

No legislation on law and order jurisdiction being conferred to state control should be enacted unless the tribes concerned shall have voted in favor of transfer of such jurisdiction from the federal government to the state or states.

Bureau control should be lessened so as to permit a more efficient administration of Indian affairs through a more active participation of Indians in discussing the problems that concern them.

Many tribes have experienced difficulties when selecting legal counsel, consultants, or when establishing tribal enterprises in the form of small business ventures. They have difficulty in achieving a high measure of self-determination through a closer relationship with other Indian tribes and organizations interested in securing greater economic and political democracy

for the American Indians.

Much work must be done to build up confidence in the Indian Bureau since we all recognize that there is a need for the Bureau despite its past dictatorial proclivities. Indians must be permitted to participate more and more in the formulation and effectuation of policies. If the Indians are assured of a chance to plan their own destiny, the tribal governing bodies will be improved because better qualified Indian leaders will be enlisted into the work so that there shall be more than a paper report approach on the land, health, housing, educational and other needs of the American Indians.

When we speak of discriminatory laws, we immediately think of the present Indian liquor law as being the last law that still infringes basic civil rights of Indians of the United States and we as Indians feel that this obsolete and discriminatory law should be repealed immediately.

We must take a more active part in our government that prescribes that all laws must have the consent of the governed. Let us exercise our franchise at every opportunity. It is very important that we vote at all elections because the outcome of this fall's election will determine the course of our lives and it will require the collective choice of all to determine what is best for us. The matter of voting is one of the grave responsibilities we must undertake. The Indian vote this year will not be overlooked and it is our duty to see that as many eligible voters are registered and that these voters vote their convictions at the polls. Our problems are no longer resolved on the battlefields of yesteryear. It is decided by the men we elect. It is up to us to continue to have the representation of friends of Indians like Henry M. Jackson and Walt Horan. There should not be partisan politics in seeking solutions to the problems confronting the American Indians because what is done in Congress deals with our survival. We must cope with the runaway emotions of

certain lawmakers who do not have our welfare in view when they drop bills in the hoppers of Congress. We must continue to support men who can give us the benefit of their inspirational leadership and guidance and who will support the rights of the common people regardless of the color of their skin. We must utilize the power of the ballot to its maximum potential.

The Indian Affairs section of the 1952 Republic Platform reads:

"All Indians are citizens of the United States and no longer should be denied full enjoyment of their rights of citizenship.

"We shall eliminate the existing shameful waste by the Bureau of Indian Affairs which has obstructed the accomplishment of our national responsibility for improving the condition of our Indian friends. We pledge to undertake programs to provide the Indians with equal opportunities for education, health protection and economic development.

"The next Republican Administration will welcome the advice and counsel of Indian leaders in selecting the Indian Commissioner."

On the other hand, the Democratic Platform proposes: "We shall continue to use the powers of the Federal Government to advance the health, education and economic well-being of our American Indian citizens, without impairing their cultural traditions. We pledge our support to the cause of fair and equitable treatment in all matters essential to and desirable for their individual and tribal welfare.

"The American Indians should be completely integrated into the social, economic and political life of the Nation. To that end we shall move to secure the prompt final settlement of Indian claims and to remove restrictions on the rights of Indians individually and through their tribal councils to handle their own fiscal affairs.

"We favor the repeal of all acts or regulations that deny to Indians rights or privileges held by citizens generally."

Those are the platforms of the two major political parties who aspire to guide our destiny during the ensuing four years.

It was my privilege to be in attendance at the convention city of Chicago this year and witness in part the mechanics of selecting the standardbearers for the Republicans and the Democrats.

I was present at Gallup, New Mexico last week when Mr. Dwight D. Eisenhower addressed a large audience of American Indians. The Republican candidate made a profound impression on the minds of Indianhood because this occasion marked the first time that any Presidential aspirant in American history had ever made a stumping speech before a substantial gathering of Indian citizens.

Mr. Eisenhower stated he was particularly sensitive to the great honor paid him by the people who first occupied this land and asking as their guest, one belonging to the profession that in years past was their enemy through the western lands throughout the area that they had inhabited for centuries in their own right. He pointed out that the fighting men involved in those struggles conducted themselves with great respect and dignity. He also mentioned that later in his life, he encountered representatives of these tribes on the field of battle. That never once in all of the campaigns of Europe with three million Americans under his command had he had occasion to hear a complaint about the battle conduct of the North American Indians.

He was particularly happy to meet with the Indians on a day when he could say that the Indians had achieved and were going to exercise a greater degree of responsibility of citizenship than ever before in Indian history, and in doing so to take up increased authority, take up citizenship and a deeply increased responsibility. That the Indian would exercise this right and this privilege day by day, month by month, year by year, all the time, and show

to his white brethren the last and final example of proper citizenship in this great country that we were privileged to call our own.

Mr. Eisenhower said he was going to try to seek out groups such as this where he could get close to people, talk to them, try to explain to people what was in his heart and mind, and try with all that was in him to learn of their everyday and immediate aspirations and hopes, and hopes for peace, what they felt about the peace, what they felt about the horrors of war, and all the questions that meant so much to all of us.

He said he could not pay too great a tribute to the spectacle he had seen in the assembly of Indianhood at Gallup, New Mexico and be taken back into the heart and culture of a people that had lived here for centuries and who had come to meet with him on a friendly, homely, beautiful basis of comradeship.

He mentioned that what meant much in American citizenship was that kind of communication between officials of government and citizens of this country that would bring about proper answers.

In closing, the Republic candidate for the highest office in this land expressed his interest in the education opportunities, health improvements and all of the other things that the American Indians so richly deserved, and which would eventually bring everyone finally to that state where there would be no difference among a people and that when they met again, they would all say, "How! American!"

This speech carried considerable significance and the Indians were favorably impressed by the recognition accorded them by a personality high in public life.

We in the National Congress of American Indians intend to do what we can to induce members of our race to register and vote at the coming elections. We are working independent of any agency of government, Federal or State, and

we are equally independent of any private organization devoted to Indian affairs.

The NCAI was founded in 1944 by the delegates of 50 tribes. Its aims and purposes arose from the principle that it should represent its members. This action was taken in response to what was believed to be the need and desire of all Indians for independent spokesmen, for reliable information about laws and policies affecting Indians, and for leadership in advancing their common interests. We are non-partisan and non-sectarian. We seek to secure to Indians and their descendants the rights and benefits to which they are entitled under the laws of the United States. The NCAI is striving to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian race and to promote the common welfare of the American Indians.

The National Congress of American Indians has accomplished much since its organization. It had a big part in bringing about the creation of the Indian Claims Commission which was established by law in 1946. It played a leading part in securing for the Indians of the Southwest the right to vote in 1948, and this year will mark the first presidential election in which the Indians of Arizona and New Mexico shall vote their convictions at the polls. The NCAI has initiated a program to train leadership of local Indian communities in finding solutions for their problems.

The Ninth Annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians will be held in Denver, Colorado, November 12, 13 and 14 of this year, and it is our hope that an even larger segment of Indianhood will be represented in the deliberations. It counts within its membership people who want to perform a service in behalf of their people. It does not subscribe to vacillating action. It is not governed by emotion and motives that clash with the ideals of good government. The membership of the NCAI is made up of good substantial citizens who are loyal to this country and what it represents.

The organization's every act is governed by integrity. Our members will work and be fair to all. Our members have a loyalty to men and loyalty to law constantly in them. Our policy makers are men who have the courage to stand in the present, examine the past, and project themselves forward in a determined and planned effort to improve the lot of their people.

We want to appeal to you to offer your best thinking and considered judgment, because the consideration and judgment you give to the problems before us will be the determining factor in the policy followed by your leaders.

In closing, I want to say that I am thankful that I was given this time to tell you of my feelings. Let us all hope that we will all benefit in some way, no matter how small it may be, by the expressions of good thinking, so that with God's help we may not only achieve, maintain and preserve peace among our own people, but among all mankind. I have humbly dedicated my life in behalf of a people I hold in high esteem, and I hope that they will accept me as a true and loyal advocate of the good that is in Indianhood. I hope that I shall in a small way add to the accomplishments of the great Indian leaders of the past. Our leaders who we remember with mixed emotions--Chief Joseph, Gochise, Crazy Horse, and many many others who reluctantly took to the field of battle to fight for the preservation of their self-respect and the preservation of all of the other things that they valued so dearly. There were other Indian leaders of more recent years who are no longer with us but what they did has not been erased from our minds. It was they who strived for our economic welfare equally as vigorously--our own Archie Phinney of the Nez Perce and Luke Gilbert of the Cheyenne River Sioux just to name two of the men who helped form the National Congress of American Indians and who had the vision and understanding that benefitted members of their race.

It has been a great pleasure to see all of you here so that we can renew our friendships and deliberate in an atmosphere^e where a grand feeling of togetherness pervades. Let us hope and trust that out of this meeting, we will get greater encouragement to move on and look into the future and that we can look into that future with our heads and our spirits high.