

INDIAN AFFAIRS

News Letter of the American Indian Fund
and the Association on American Indian Affairs, Inc.
48 East 86 Street, N. Y. 28, N. Y.

Supplement to
No. 8, New Series

THE INDIAN TRIBES SPEAK

The Association on American Indian Affairs asked the Indian tribes what they wanted to say to their fellow-citizens about the Federal abandonment policy as expressed in the Competency Bill, the State Law and Order Act, and the numerous Termination Bills. Their replies poured in—highly articulate, semi-literate, translated from native Indian languages, or signed with an X. Here are some of the things the Indians said, led off by an appeal of three chiefs of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla tribes of Oregon. This appeal is Indian and beautiful in an old way which will no longer be permitted to enrich American life if the present trend in Indian affairs is not halted.

Statement of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Chiefs

"... In the years beginning in 1855 and subsequent thereto, by virtue of the Treaty of 1855 with the various tribes of Indians in Washington and Oregon, the Indians relinquished their inherent rights to large portions of land in both states (then the territory of Washington), and at this time, the Indians agreed to remove to various portions of lands, called reservations, there to live under a beneficent wardship of the Federal Government. At that time, it was clear to the Federal Government that the Indian was not ready for full citizenship, and that he must be protected from the commercial instinct and sharp practices of the white citizens of the Territory. Today, we are being told, that we now are ready for full citizenship; that we are mentally competent to buy and sell lands, buy intoxicants and generally carry on business, and business practices without any restrictions whatsoever. Admittedly the tendencies of the white man to cheat and defraud the Indian have not changed over these last hundred years since the signing of the treaty. If this is so, then how can it be argued with any sincerity that the ability of the Indian to defend himself against these white man tendencies has changed? We still have today on the Umatilla Reservation essentially the same Indian that inhabited this reservation many many years ago. He

is just as susceptible to the sharp practices of the white man; just as easily influenced by friendly overtures, aided and abetted by liquid refreshments, as he was then. The education facilities that have generally been made available to the younger Indians have largely been superficial. They have been more or less educated in theory, but certainly they have not been educated in fact, so as to be able to cope with a commercial and selfish world. For a hundred years they have been taught that they were not competent to handle their commercial interests; not competent to buy and sell lands; and not competent to compete with the whites. All this training has instilled in the mind of the Indian a complex of inferiority that will not easily be eradicated, and which certainly has not in any way been diminished by the superficial education which the younger element has acquired. Now, it has been recommended that the Indian be released from the restrictions of his wardship, and his reservation liquidated..." (March 31, 1952)

ANDREW BARNHART
Interpreter

LUKE SOWAFROO, *Chief of Cayuse Tribe*
TOM JOE, *Chief of Umatilla Tribe*
JIM KANIE, *Chief of Walla Walla Tribe*

Indian Opinion of The Withdrawal Program under which the Federal Government is abandoning trust protection of the Indian tribes (a selection)

KAIBAB TRIBAL COUNCIL, ARIZONA: "We want eventually to be free to manage all our own affairs as full citizens. We want the government to help us get ready for this day—to give us full protection, to fully educate our children, to aid us in economic development... It is as a fully responsible tribal council that we would like to move our people into full citizenship. We would like the government to accept the decisions of tribal councils, thus letting us try our freedom gradually." (Signed, BILL TOM, Nov. 18, 1953)

STOCKBRIDGE MUNSEE INDIAN COMMUNITY, WISCONSIN: "With the ending of Federal trusteeship there will be no future for the American Indian. The Republican platform promised to correct 'abuse, hardship, discrimination against the Indian who has been most victimized by unfair policies and legislation.' Don't their promises mean a thing? For all this legislation in its present form is unfair... It appears that we just have some different Houdinis in Washington who are doing the victimizing. We do not want Federal trusteeship ended... As our constitutions and charters are set up under the Reorganization Act of 1934, they provide a method step by step in which we Indians can ask and have certain authorities turned over... as they, the Indians see fit, and we believe that it should continue that way. No blanket legislation is going to do any good. It will only do harm and more harm. The Indians are many different people—different economic problems, and different ways of tribal life. Did this government set up blanket legislation to cover West Germany, Japan, Korea, etc.?..." (Signed, ARVID MILLER, Pres., Nov. 11, 1953)

CHOCTAW NATION, OKLAHOMA: "I think this is another of those moves by Congress to 'get the Government out of the Indian business,' another effort to shirk its responsibility to a people who owned the entire continent of North America when the White Man first invaded (not discovered) this country..." (Signed, HARRY J. W. BELVIN, Principal Chief, Nov. 29, 1953)

JEMEZ PUEBLO, NEW MEXICO: "End of Federal trusteeship has been discussed thoroughly. We know it will be hard for my people. Over half of my people are not educated enough to handle their own affairs. It is hard to believe even some of our members of our tribe do not know who is our President or the Governor of New Mexico. This shows what we are still lacking." (Signed, JUAN LUIS PECOS, Governor, Nov. 23, 1953)

OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE, SOUTH DAKOTA: "The majority of the adult Oglala Sioux People of the Pine Ridge Reservation... oppose the assimilation program now being studied by experts in their line of thought, but ignorant as far as the line of Indian thought is concerned. If by assimilation you mean the opening of Indian reservations..., the loss of Indian identity and Indian traditions, then we are further opposed... Read the placards found conspicuously

in windows of the so-called civilized (?) towns and cities where Sioux Indians frequently visit. The town... chambers of commerce evidently approve the actions of the business people who brazenly display such discriminating placards that read 'We Do Not Solicit Indian Trade'... The Pine Ridge Reservation... is our last Indian country. We desire to maintain it as The Home for All Oglala Sioux People." (Excerpt from editorial in THE SHANNON COUNTY NEWS, Pine Ridge, S. D., October 1, 1953)

Indian Opinion of The Competency Bill (H.R. 4985) to end as quickly as possible individual trust protection and Federal services, weighted against the survival of tribal Indian society.

KEWEENAW BAY CHIPPEWA INDIAN COMMUNITY, MICHIGAN: "... While we wish to believe that Congressional acts affecting our tribal affairs are intended to benefit our condition and straighten out our tangled affairs, yet after calm and sober deliberation our Council feels that the proposed Bill will be detrimental to the interests of the Indians in general, and will adversely affect the operation of our Tribal organizations... From our remote and rather obscure viewpoint the proposed Bill appears to us to lean very heavily towards releasing the Government from its obligations and responsibilities assumed in exchange for vast tracts of valuable mineral, timber, and fertile farm lands..." (Signed, CHARLES PICARD, President, October 10, 1953)

SAN CARLOS APACHE TRIBAL COUNCIL AND INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA (from a letter to Hon. Harold A. Patten, House of Representatives, Wash., D. C.): "... We know that many legislators endorse H.R. 4985 in the mistaken belief that they are supporting a measure which would really help the Indians. An "emancipation" bill, if enacted on the lines of H.R. 4985 would severely disrupt the operation of tribal government and shatter the foundation on which tribal economic and social organization is based. An Indian who wants to sever all relations with his tribe and with the Federal Government, as an Indian, can do so without special legislation. We had a case of this nature last year where an enrolled member of the Tribe disaffiliated himself from the Tribe. Such action should be optional, and not mandatory. Nobody could wish for complete competency and unrestricted citizenship more than the American Indians, but, due to the problems they are confronted with during this their transition from the old ways to the new, especially in the Southwest, they cannot attain this status over night by the sudden termination of public services financed or subsidized by the Federal Government. The ultimate goal should be the gradual transfer of responsibility for such services to State or local governments or to the Indians themselves. The tribal organizations are working towards assumption of this responsibility. To disrupt the basis of these organizations would void all progress made by the Indians towards competency and self-government. In behalf of the people I represent, I request your assistance in preventing the enactment of H.R. 4985."

(Signed, CLARENCE WESLEY, Chairman, July 14, 1953)

PAWNEE BUSINESS COUNCIL, OKLAHOMA (from a letter to Hon. Douglas McKay, Secretary of the Interior): "... As of this date the U. S. Government has not made adequate indemnification to the Pawnees for the taking of their fertile land which was rich in furs and wild game. . . . We, the members of the Pawnee Tribe believe that we are entitled to everything the Government is giving us, because we feel the Government owes us plenty of cash, protection and good will, for the Pawnees were never at war with the Government; instead, they have remained loyal. We believe that it is best for us to be rehabilitated before being removed from Government supervision, as it is our sincere desire to be an asset to our Government, rather than a liability. . . ."

(Signed, GEORGE H. ROBERTS, SR., *President*, July 23, 1953)

Indian Opinion of Public Law 280, authorizing any State to assume civil and criminal jurisdiction over its Indians without Indian consent (a selection)

SANTO DOMINGO PUEBLO, NEW MEXICO (from telegram to President Eisenhower): "... We remember your promises that Indians would be consulted before you did anything important affecting them. H.R. 1063 (*now Public Law 280*) would destroy our self-government, steal our rights, and break up

our way of life. No Indians were consulted about it. It was sneaked through when no one was looking. Therefore we are trusting you as a great leader and man of honor to respect the wishes of the Indians and veto this bill."

(Signed, FERNANDO CORIZ, *Governor*, Aug. 13, 1953)

PIT RIVER TRIBE, XL RANCH, ALTURAS, CALIFORNIA: "I noticed that the information put out by the California Indian Office to the American people stated that *all* Indians and Indian organizations in California favored passage of P.L. 280. Of some 600 Pit River Indians ten of us heard what Mr. Clark had to say about P.L. 280. The rest had no way of knowing he was around. However, I managed to round up enough leaders to examine the contents of 280. Every tribal representative present rejected the bill. We immediately sent telegrams to our Congressmen and sent an official set of minutes to the California Indian Office, stating our position. We note that when the bill was made law certain tribes of other states were exempted because they did not approve of the bill. I appeal to you to find out why the Pit River Home and Agricultural Cooperative Association and the Pit River Tribe received no such consideration. I have at my disposal all the papers necessary to prove that our people rejected 280 long before the deadline set by the California Indian Office. It was in their hands and yet they reported to Congressional committees that *all* Indians of California favored said bill. They reported an ungodly lie."

(Signed, ERIN FORREST, *President*, Nov. 13, 1953)

Immediate Abandonment Program

(A selection of statements by tribes marked for quick termination)

SKULL VALLEY BAND OF THE SHOSHONE TRIBE, UTAH:—S. 2670, H.R. 7390 (included because it raises the question of what standard is used to determine the "readiness" of an Indian tribe for termination of Federal trust protection): "... We don't want to break our treaty with white people before we get our treaty right. Right today we are living poor and needy people. We don't want to sell our reservation land. This our reservation land are utilized for our young generation. We are still Indian and born raise on this United States, we mean on this island. The white people given us this reservation the time they making peace treaty with Shoshoni-Goshop. And we get no right to pay such taxes. This is our territory and our reservation land for our use long as we Indians living on it. On December 30, 1953 Mr. Watkins was down at Fillmore, Utah. On meeting and making speeches, Iby Bear was down there. But Mr. Watkins don't give chance to each individual person chance to say something with Mr. Watkins that time cause he didn't give us no chance to talk. . . . This said by Group of Skull Valley Indian Band." (Signed, *Acting Chiefs*, ENNIS MOON, TOM WASH, IBY BEAR, RICHARD BEAR, LIZA MOON NECK, Feb. 10, 1954)

SEMINOLE TRIBE, FLORIDA—S. 2747, H.R. 7321 (from official report of meeting to discuss Bills): "We, the Seminole Indians of Florida, request that no action be taken on the termination of Federal supervision over the property of the Seminole Indians for a period of twenty-five years for the following reasons: 1. *Lack of Education*—At the present time the Seminole Indians do not have members who have advanced enough to take care of the administration of tribal property. Only in the past few years have our children attended school. . . . Now about 100 children are in public schools, and about 60 in Government schools. Approximately 70 or 80 children are not enrolled in any school . . . Only three or four students have completed high school, but it will not be too many years before some of our boys and girls have advanced enough to represent our people in their dealings with the Federal and State governments. . . . 2. *Improvement of Lands—Pastures*—Our reservation lands are not . . . income producing, and should be held in trust for us for a period of 25 years. The flood control projects would be completed by that time . . . and some income could be obtained from the land to use for paying taxes. . . . Our cattle enterprises are just beginning to function. . . . We have much to learn about cattle and range management, but under Federal supervision and with the assistance of our present agricultural extension agent, we should progress and in the next few years learn to manage our own business affairs. 3. *Health Conditions*— . . . We have much to learn about sanitation, care of the sick, infant care, disease prevention, etc. The Government has a public health nurse to work among us, and her services are needed to teach the proper preparation of food, care of sick, and sanitation. . . . Continuance of the present public health program is requested. 4. *Roads*—The U. S. Indian Service has had a good program on our reservations during the past six years. . . . More secondary roads within the two reservations are needed . . . in order to open up some sections for grazing and farming which are now inaccessible. . . . 5. *Homes of Indians*. Our Indians are still living in their native 'chickees,' open on all sides with a roof of cabbage palm. . . . Only two of the homes on the Dania Reservation have running water. . . . There are no sanitary facilities on any of the reservations. . . . 6. *Flood Control and Water Conservation*

—The Big Cypress Reservation is near the flood control project, and until a part of the . . . land is properly drained, very little can be done on improvement of much of the range land. . . . 7. *Conclusion*—The U. S. Indian Service was not active here in Florida until about 1933. . . . During the past 20 years our advancement has been rapid, but we need guidance for a longer period and we look to the Federal Government for continuance of their supervision." (Signed, BETTY MAE JUMPER, *Secretary of Seminole Tribal Committee*, Oct. 16, 1953)

KICKAPOO TRIBE, KANSAS—S. 2743, H.R. 7318 (from Resolution of Kickapoo Tribal Council): "... There are some 170 Kickapoo Indians . . . whose chief source of income are the rentals . . . from land held in trust by the Government. . . . All the land on the . . . reservation has deteriorated so badly that only a fraction of its former productivity remains . . . and an additional burden of high land taxes can not be met without an appreciable lowering of living standards which are already far below those of our white neighbors. . . . Indians of the Kickapoo Reservation . . . are lacking in education and are totally unaware . . . of the many civil laws to which . . . they would be subjected. . . . There is never enough money in a household to maintain a proper standard of living. . . . There is . . . discrimination in the public schools which our children must attend. Our children are shunned by their non-Indian school-mates. . . . Indians who have equal job qualifications with non-Indians are almost always given the last opportunity for employment when the employer has a choice. . . . We feel that this bill should not become law because in doing so we are thrown upon the public not as assets but as liabilities. . . . We want our lands to remain for our children and our children's children as was promised our forefathers when they were forced to move from place to place. . . . We ask in all humility that our views and wishes be respected, that serious consideration be given to our objections. . . ." (Signed, VESTANA CADUE, *Chairman*, Oct. 27, 1953)

FORT BIDWELL INDIAN COMMUNITY, FORT BIDWELL, CALIFORNIA—S. 2749, H.R. 7322 (from resolution passed by tribal council): "Have the United States Government fulfilled its obligation? This was the question asked by the son of Chief Ochiho when asked his opinion as regarding the Termination of Federal Supervision of the California Indians. It was brought out by Dick Ochiho, 90 years old, son of Chief Ochiho who in turn was the Chief of the band whose descendants are now known as the Fort Bidwell Indians, that there was a treaty negotiated between General Johnny Cook and the Chief and his band, whereby the General (representing the U. S. Government) promised to provide for the welfare of the Band. It is the contention of the Fort Bidwell Indians that the Bill in general jeopardizes the social and economic welfare of the tribe by providing for the exploitation by crooks and political real estate grafters after the removal of Federal protection. The Fort Bidwell Indians through proper administration of their tribal assets can be placed on economic basis, not dependent on the welfare agencies of the state of California. Such a progress requires further monetary assistance from the Federal Government. . . . A program of this nature requires the supervision of someone who would be able to teach the Indians the proper management of their property. . . . We Indians of the Fort Bidwell Reservation are demanding that the Houses of Congress consider these things; unwise judgment on your part may be disastrous to us." (Signed, RALPH DE GARMO, Feb. 24, 1954)