

March 2, 1951

Mr. Harry J. W. Belvin  
Principal Chief, Choctaw Nation  
Durant, Oklahoma

Dear Jimmy:

Thank you for your letter of February 27, in further reference to a proposal to set up a Correspondence Section in the Per Capita Payment Section of the Muskogee Area Office, to facilitate the handling of future per capita payments to the Choctaw and Chickasaw Tribes of Indians.

You may be assured that I am in complete accord with this proposal and will exert every influence at my command to put it into effect.

I certainly think that in fairness to the members of these two Tribes, a system should be worked out to acknowledge receipt of proofs of heirship, answer inquiries enabling them to fill out their proofs properly, and some identification made on the checks sent out.

Sincerely yours,

CA:m

CARL ALBERT, M. C.  
Third District, Oklahoma



CARL ALBERT  
RECEIVED  
MAR 2 1951  
RESOLIVE  
3rd Dist- Oklahoma

## Principal Chief, Choctaw Nation

DURANT, OKLAHOMA

February 27, 1951

HARRY J. W. BELVIN  
PRINCIPAL CHIEF

Congressman Carl Albert  
House Office Building  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Congressman Albert:

I am enclosing herewith a copy of a letter I have just completed to Mr. Clyde Busey, Attorney Advisor of the Per Capita Payment Section, Muskogee, Oklahoma, which I feel should have your attention.

My reason for sending you this copy is to alert you to some of the criticism which is coming from the Area Office at Muskogee and pointed at those of us who are trying to discharge our duty to our constituents. Such employees as Mr. Busey do not have to depend upon the good will of the voting public for their positions, therefore, it is easy for them to ignore their pleadings, and to "pass the buck." Perhaps I do not need to tell you that untold numbers of Indians throughout the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations resent the policy of procrastination and delay in making the dead claim payments, and the lack of information which they receive from the Per Capita Payment Section.

I have incurred the ill-will of this Section and also that of the Area Director because of my constant prodding, pleading, and even insistence, that the Indians be informed as to the status of their dead claims. I have exercised, I think, some patience, in that approximately a year of patient pleading with the Area Director and the Attorney Advisor had availed the Indians exactly ~~zero~~ in this respect before I started a campaign against this neglect.

I voice the sentiment of literally thousands of people when I say that a Correspondence Section should be created as a part of the Per Capita Payment Section to write letters, and to otherwise disseminate information to the Indians in connection with this, the most important item of business confronting them at this time. And I am frank in saying that our constituents expect their elected officials to exert their influence to see that they get the service they deserve.

After due thought and some unhappy experience, I wish to recommend to you that you use your influence in earmarking a portion of whatever funds are appropriated for making these payments for the express purpose of employing a

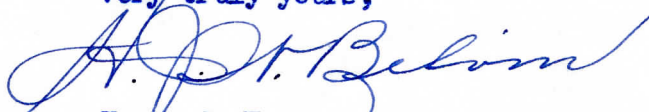


correspondence staff to keep the Indians informed, to answer their letters of inquiry, and to return all incomplete proofs of heirship for attention. As I understand it, many of the complicated proofs of heirship are still lying in the Per Capita Payment Section awaiting attention and in many instances the claimants have not heard one word about them, therefore, do not know whether they have been received or not although some of them were filed some sixteen months ago. I have literally hundreds of letters from Indians in my files to substantiate this statement. This is Indian business, and should be tended to. It is a part of the process necessary to good administration of this phase of Indian affairs and, as Chief of the Choctaws, I am respectfully asking your assistance in this matter.

I am taking the liberty of sending a copy of this letter to those indicated at the bottom of this page so that they may know of my efforts to get some relief in this log jam. Congressman Stigler informed me over the phone the other day that the Leased District Funds are now awaiting distribution, so you can see that if some satisfactory method for keeping the Indians informed on the progress of these payments is not devised, we officials are going to be deluged with letters of inquiry and complaint so that we won't have time for anything else.

I shall be awaiting your reply with the hope that you will find a way to break this log jam.

Very truly yours,



Harry J. W. Belvin  
Principal Chief of  
the Choctaw Nation

HJWB:P

cc: Congressman W. G. Stigler  
Senator Mike Monroney  
Senator Robert S. Kerr  
D. S. Myer, Commissioner of Indian Affairs  
Oscar L. Chapman, Secretary of Interior  
W. O. Roberts, Area Director

February 24, 1951

Mr. Clyde Busey, Attorney Advisor  
Per Capita Payment Section  
Muskogee Area Office  
Muskogee, Oklahoma

Dear Mr. Busey:

I did not write you the February 15 letter which you answered, but I am not surprised that you were the unsuspecting scape-goat. I wrote this letter to Mr. Roberts and asked for a specific reply from him, but he chose to shoulder you with the responsibility of answering, but I think I know why. In all my pleadings to you to give the Indians some relief in the disseminating of information relative to their business, you have chosen to ignore me, but when Mr. Roberts handed you one of his letters to answer, in your haste to do the bidding of your master, you got all confused, probed deep into the hidden recesses of your tricky memory and came up with a withering blast of vitriolic vituperation based upon something you read in the paper.

For instance, you state in your masterpiece of Almighty Bosh, "Actually, and you of all people have had opportunity to ascertain and should know the true facts, there is approximately \$3,000,000 undistributed, and your statement to the press that the recent ruling of the Bureau of Indian Affairs relative to certain unknown facts would release 10,000 claims for payment, when it was known to you that there were 14,000 dead claims, and that at the time of making the statement, 7,150 claims had been processed. It is appalling for such false information to come from the Principal Chief of the Choctaws."

I am asking you to read the enclosed news release written by me on February 9, and mailed to approximately forty state papers for publication. Then, read the article on the front page, column seven, of the Durant Daily Democrat of February 8, and you will no doubt remember who gave out the "false information" you so glibly accused me of giving out, in your letter. You will note that the Democrat quotes Congressman Albert as stating that a "ruling of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs will expedite payment of 10,000 Choctaw-Chickasaw claims under the \$8,500,000 coal land agreement." This same article avers in the last paragraph, "Tribal spokesmen estimate the new order would



C  
O  
P  
Y

allow settlement of \$1,000,000 in claims." Why don't you ascertain who the tribal spokesmen were who made the conservative estimate? I did not make this estimate, and any allusion that I ever made to these figures in any correspondence to individual Indians was a reference to the figures quoted in the article referred to above. I am sending your caustic and confused letter to the congressman with a proper explanatory letter so that he may know your reaction to his and my efforts to do something for the people who vote for him and me. The trouble with some of you in the Area Office--not all in the office, however--is that you have been accustomed to living fat off the government payroll, pretending to work, going out at regular intervals during working hours for your coffee, and while deep in your coffee cups, you inflate your ego by boasting that you will run that business as you see fit and some of us who are trying to do something about helping the poor Indians can just "sweat it out." You are just not used to people who believe in working for the Indians and when you have to deal with one who insists on an honest day's work for an honest dollar, then, you start howling and hurling unfounded accusations and investives in an effort to make yourself believe that you are the one invested with Divine authority to steer the destiny of a people.

The following excerpt from a letter which I received a few days ago from an unknown friend states; among other things:

"I am writing you this letter because I sympathize with you in your efforts to get the Area Director and his cohorts to give an honest day's work to the matter of cleaning up the per capita claims of the Choctaws and Chickasaws. I have heard so much complaint about the way they are dragging this matter out at the 5 Civilized Tribes Office so that their jobs may go on indefinitely. -----Just today I was in one of the eating places near the Postoffice building where there is hardly an hour in the day that these govt. workers are not idling around taking on refreshments and lambasting about everything in general. I heard one of the women say that her boss had received another one of those scorching letters from old nosey Harry Belvin trying to tell us how to pay off these Indians. That does not disturb us though because we are going to run this as we think best and let him sweat it out."

The above will give you some idea as to how some people feel about the delaying action practiced by your department in disbursing money that should have been in the hands of the Indians soon after the Supplemental Atoka Agreement of 1902. They question, "How much longer will we have to wait?"

You invite me to spend a week or so in your office so that I may "gain first hand knowledge of the workings of the Per Capita Payment Section." If you will make such action reciprocal, I shall be glad to accept your proposal, however, I must warn you that you will be required to attend the Indian meetings all over the Choctaw Nation in addition to spending considerable time in the office gaining "firsthand knowledge of the workings" of the Chief's Office.



C  
O  
P  
Y

Your allegation that I have spent but one hour in the Per Capita Payment Section since the beginning of the payments is an example of how poorly informed you are of my work. You must remember that Mr. Phifer headed that division several months before you assumed command. During those first months, I spent, first and last, possibly several days in that division, and if you will try to recall, I am sure you will remember that I visited you on several occasions before Mr. Phifer left, and have visited you several times since he left. On one occasion, August 10, 1950, at your request I met with you and Mr. Phifer in your office at 1:00 p. m. and left at 2:45 p. m.; this is according to my official record. You will observe that this constitutes just one and three-fourths times as long as you stated in your letter, which is only one instance. I can state one thing for a fact, which you cannot deny and make stand up, and that is that I have spent enough time in your section to be fully aware of the lack of adequate organization for the purpose of rendering efficient service to the Indians in all respects pertaining to the processing of their claims while at the same time keeping them satisfied with the type of service your section is giving them in keeping them advised through correspondence which, after all, is a function of your division.

Now what are you angry about? It simply boils down to this:

You don't like for a little Chief to try to point out your sad lack of organization in a thing as big as the proposition you head up, and to try to get you to do something constructive about it. Your quarreling with me about it will avail you exactly nothing, for I am going to demonstrate the effectiveness of proper organization of the Indians to get the results due them. You must remember that we do not have to depend upon appointed officials alone in our plea for justice and service, and I happen to know that there is a lot of sympathy toward our cause.

If we don't get the service we deserve, I am going to enlist the cooperation of the rank and file Choctaw in an effort through petition, or otherwise, addressed to some of our elected officials for a reorganization of the Per Capita Payment Section. We may have to have the help of our tribal attorneys, but I feel certain their services can be procured.

Very truly yours,

Harry J. W. Belvin  
Principal Chief of  
the Choctaw Nation