

STATEMENT OF REP. CARL ALBERT
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
OF THE COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS

May 14, 1970

Mr. Chairman:

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to appear before your distinguished subcommittee in support of H. R. 15866, a bill to repeal the Act of August 25, 1959, with respect to the final disposition of the affairs of the Choctaw Tribe. This bill has been sponsored by all Members of the Oklahoma Congressional delegation, including two members of this distinguished subcommittee, Mr. Edmondson and Mr. Camp. May I also express my appreciation, Mr. Chairman, for the expeditious manner in which your Committee has scheduled this bill for action in light of the fact that if the bill is to be effective at all, it must be enacted prior to August 25th of this year.

The Department of the Interior has presented an excellent departmental report on H. R. 15866 which, in my view, makes abundantly clear the need for this legislation. The report points out that the Choctaw Tribe, in seeking passage of the original Choctaw Termination Act of 1959, acted out of the strong desire among the Choctaw people for some form of self-rule. When this Committee acted in response to that request in 1959 neither the Indians who sought the legislation nor those of us in Congress who sponsored it had any idea of the extreme difficulties which would be encountered in carrying out the provisions of the Act. The departmental report discusses these problems in detail and I would only emphasize that from the many personal contacts I have had with the Chief of the Choctaws and with individual members of the tribe it is apparent that it is a practicable impossibility to carry out the provisions of the 1959 Act, particularly those which relate to selling land and interests in land owned by the Choctaw Tribe.

One other major problem with respect to the 1959 Act is the fear of the Choctaw Tribe that the Act will, when it becomes effective, terminate the eligibility of individual Choctaw members for certain federal services now provided Indians because of their status as Indians. Many of the Choctaws are, in fact, a dis-

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advantaged and deprived people. It is absolutely necessary to their well-being and to the betterment of their present condition that services and benefits provided them as Indians continue. Repeal of the Act of August 25, 1959, and continued recognition of the Choctaw Tribe as an entity will greatly facilitate the provision of these benefits and services.

While it is quite true that the Choctaws in 1959 sought the passage of the Act which my bill will repeal, it is clear that overwhelmingly their view has changed with respect to tribal termination. The tribal leaders and individual Choctaws no longer wish to be terminated. They desire that the Federal Government continue to recognize the Choctaw Tribe in the same manner as it now recognizes the other four civilized tribes. I have with me, and offer for the Committee record at this time, a resolution adopted by the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes urging passage of H. R. 15866 and also resolutions adopted by the various Choctaw Councils urging passage of this bill.

Mr. Chairman, again may I express my thanks to you and your distinguished Committee for your courtesy in scheduling this bill for consideration. I am confident that you will recognize the merits of this legislation.

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Mr. Chairman, again may I express my thanks to you and your distinguished Committee for your courtesy in scheduling this bill for consideration. I am confident that you will recognize the merits of this legislation.

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The Department of the Interior has presented an excellent departmental report on H. R. 15866 which, in my view, makes abundantly clear the need for this legislation. The report points out that the Choctaw Tribe, in seeking passage of the original Choctaw Termination Act of 1959, acted out of the strong desire among the Choctaw people for some form of self-rule.

When this Committee acted in response to that request in 1959 neither the Indians who sought the legislation nor those of us in Congress who sponsored it had ^{any} idea of the extreme difficulties which would be encountered in carrying out the provisions of the Act. The departmental report ^{discusses these problems in detail} is ~~quite clear in this regard~~ and I would only emphasize that from the many personal contacts I have had with the Chief of the Choctaws and with individual members of the tribe ^{Apparent that it is} ~~that it is~~ a practicable impossibility to carry out the provisions of the 1959 Act, ^{particularly those} ~~which relate to~~ selling land ~~and interests~~ in land owned by the Choctaw Tribe.

One other major problem with respect to the 1959 Act is the fear of the Choctaw Tribe that the Act will, when it becomes effective, terminate the eligibility of individual Choctaw members for certain federal services now provided Indians because of their status as Indians. ~~I would emphasize in this regard that the facts contained in the departmental report concerning the economic status of the Choctaw Indians, most of whom live in my Congressional District.~~ Many of ^{the Choctaws} ~~them~~ are, in fact, ^a ~~disadvantaged and deprived~~ people. It is absolutely necessary to their well-being and to the betterment of their present condition that services and benefits provided them as Indians continue. Repeal of the Act of August 25,

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Mr. Chairman, again may I express my thanks to you and your distinguished Committee for your courtesy in scheduling this bill for consideration. I ^{am confident} earnestly ~~hope~~ that you will recognize the merits of ^{this} ~~the~~ legislation ~~and order the bill reported to the full committee and subsequently, to the House of Representatives.~~

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The Department of the Interior has presented an excellent departmental report on H. R. 1588 which, in my view, makes abundantly clear the need for this legislation. The report points out that the Choctaw Tribe, in seeking passage of the original Choctaw Termination Act of 1959, acted

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