



—Pioneer Press Photos by Don Spavin

HAND BEADED NECKLACES

Mrs. Lucille Childs (right) presents some of her hand work to Mrs. Fred Harris and Mrs. Walter Mondale.

New Homes Going Up

Senators' Wives Visit Prairie Island Indians

By ELLA WARMINGTON
Staff Writer

PRAIRIE ISLAND — There was real excitement among the 20 Indian families at Prairie Island Reservation Monday.

Wives of two U. S. senators, federal officials, aides, secretaries, cameramen and reporters all came to visit, driving in a motorcade from one tiny house to another on the 640-acre reservation here between Hastings and Red Wing.

Mrs. Walter Mondale and Mrs. Fred Harris, wives of Democratic junior senators from Minnesota and Oklahoma, laughed and visited and accepted beautifully beaded necklaces and emblems.

They looked over the new housing project, and asked about educational and health conditions.

THE WOMEN were on the first stop of a three-day tour of Minnesota Indian Reservations including stops at Prairie Island, White Earth, Red Lake, Leech Lake and Fond du Lac reservations.

Smaller than most Indian communities, Prairie Island is comprised of some 100 Sioux and Chippewa people living in the flat, river bank area along the Mississippi.

From the highway, drivers can see no tourist signs, no signs of industry and not much evidence of a residential area.

Representatives for the Goodhue - Rice - Wabasha

county area describe it as rural poverty.

MRS. MONDALE said she was shocked to see the reservation poverty, but she saw enthusiasm and progress because of the three-county Community Action Program including Prairie Island.

Her companion, Mrs. Harris, wasn't so shocked. She belongs to the Comanche Indian Tribe and has been active in efforts to help Oklahoma Indians.

One of the problems, Mrs. Harris said, was to correct the stereotype of Indians.

"So many people believe the stereotypes," she said,

"that Indians work well with their hands, but not with their brains. The Indian children begin to believe it."

Mrs. Harris impressed the Indians. Mrs. Mondale hoped she would.

"JUST BY the fact that LaDonna is an Indian herself," Mrs. Mondale said, "perhaps these people will be motivated and will have more pride in their heritage."

"We want Indians to know," Mrs. Harris said, "that they can enter any field they want to — art, and music, for instance."

Telling of her efforts to

interest Indians in the Peace Corps, Mrs. Harris said that their service has a double value.

"It gets the Indian outside his world," she said. "He sees problems that are greater than his own, and when he returns he will have a good impact on his community."

"USUALLY, Peace Corpsmen decide on more education. One of the reasons that Indian children don't stay in school is the poverty at home. They feel out of place."

Homes were one problem the local Community Action Program was working with.

It was the most exciting part of the program for the Indians.

Ten new homes, mostly three-bedroom ramblers, are scheduled to be finished by December.

No plumbing, no insulation, and bad wiring, if any, were some of the problems in the old houses. Each of the new homes will have a well. Wells in many of the homes were ruined when the Mississippi flooded in 1965.

Although Indians work seasonally off the reservation, they stay in their homes during the summer after the floods.

FLAG LOVER

Lena Campbell, 84, tells Mrs. Harris (left) and Mrs. Mondale how she found the flag on the road and hung it on her house. Mrs. Campbell is known in the reservation for her fine beadwork.



7 CHILDREN AND A NEW GRANDDAUGHTER

Admiring 3-month-old Colleen White are Mrs. Harris, left; Sandra White, 7; Mrs. Mondale; Mrs. Noah White, and Noah White Jr., 10.



COMMUNITY ACTION

Work on the reservation community hall is one place for activity at Prairie Island. Mrs. Harris (left) and Mrs. Mondale visit with Mary White, 19, and Deborah White, 15, who helped putty windows.



A VISIT to several of Minnesota's Indian reservations is on the schedule of Mrs. Fred Harris, right, wife of the junior senator from Oklahoma. Mrs. Harris arrived in St. Paul Monday and was greeted by Mrs. Walter Mondale. Above, the women look over the travel plans that took them Monday to Prairie Island where they visited with Indian families. Today and Wednesday they will tour the northern Minnesota reservations. Mrs. Harris has helped Indians in her state and Mrs. Mondale is hopeful that she will offer some suggestions for working with Minnesota's Indians and helping with their problems.

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