

February 27, 1946

Mr. Ben Carpenter
Talala, Oklahoma

Dear Ben:

I have your letter of February 15th, which I found awaiting me upon my return to Washington this morning.

I certainly read what you had to say with reference to the Indian Claims bill with more than usual interest. First, I read it with interest because you have the Indian's welfare at heart and know the way people in our part of the country feel about it. In the next place, I am able to understand just what you are driving at because we have discussed this question personally. I quite well remember our talk at Whiteoak in December last year, while I was touring the District.

The question in my mind is, what is the proper thing to do? I know that you and I see exactly alike on this Indian Bureau. I would do away with about nine-tenths of it if I could. However, there are a lot of tribes of Indians, most of whom live outside Oklahoma, who, for one reason or another, have not advanced as far as the Oklahoma Indians. In particular, the Indians of my District are more intelligent, better educated and have been better assimilated into the population and activities of government and business than those of almost any other area. The Five Civilized Tribes were properly so named. The Osages are intelligent and so are the Indians in the extreme Northeastern part of the State, as well as the Pawnees, the Otoe's and the Kaws.

Those who have Indian claims are not always the people of the First Congressional District of Oklahoma, but many more claims exist in other states. For one reason or another, these other Indians have not advanced in civilization like our Oklahoma Indians have. Some of them apparently will need some governmental help for a long time to come. But there is no sense in talking about continuing regimentation of the Indians by the Bureau indefinitely, and especially the Indians of our part of the country. I think it would be reasonable to assume that ninety to nine-five per cent of the Indians of Northeastern Oklahoma are capable of handling their own business affairs, and I am willing to do anything I can to see that they are so handled, without the interference or supervision of the Indian Agency or Bureau.

However, there are a lot of claims that must be presented somewhere, and to some constituted authority. Who is to handle these claims? Under the present law, they must be presented to Congress, and what they call a jurisdictional bill must be passed. The jurisdictional bill, when passed, gives jurisdiction to the U. S. Court of Claims. There, each claim must be separately presented to the Court on its own merits, and according to strict rules of law. This generally results in very few of them ever being paid any money.

The truth of the matter is that Congress perhaps will never pass many more jurisdictional bills, which means that very few claims of the future are likely to be allowed and paid. Very few have been allowed and paid in the past.

It seems to me much better to allow every Indian or tribe of Indians to have a bureau to whom they can present their cases, based upon the theory of fair dealing between man and man, the Indians and the United States, rather than upon technical legal grounds. I am against the creation of bureaus and I am in favor of doing away with all of them I can; but both the major political parties of this country have endorsed the establishment of a tribunal which will hear and pass upon these claims for the benefit of the Indians. Democrats and Republicans alike have agreed that a bill substantially the same as that reported out by the House Committee on Indian Affairs is the most logical approach to and solution of this problem. Numerous Indians testified in favor of the bill, and so far as I know, none testified against it. It will do away with a lot of grafting by unscrupulous lawyers and promoters, and will enable the Indians to present their claims and have them passed upon, favorably or unfavorably, when nothing else will fill this need, so far as anyone has been able to suggest up to this time.

If you have any other idea as to how this problem can be solved in any better manner, of course I wish you would give me your idea and plan. I have worked hard to try to think of a better way to handle the situation; but frankly, I have not found it, and neither has anyone else suggested it. You will do me a great favor if you will tell me what you think can be done. I know it is easy to say, take the money that is being spent on the bureaus and give it to the Indians. But to which Indians, or tribes, are we going to give it? Some of them have claims much more meritorious than others. In fact, some of them perhaps do not have any claims at all. I am in favor of doing what you say, but there must be some tribunal to determine which ones are entitled to the money, and who is going to determine that under the present setup?

Thanking you again for your letter and the interest you have manifested, and with all good wishes, I am

Your friend,

Talala, Okla., February 15, 1946.

Hon. Geo. B. Schwabe, M. C.
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

Dear George:

You are now back in Washington rested from your recent trip into Oklahoma, and as we say out West, "ready and a rearing."

When I talked with you at White Oak you will recall I said I did not wish to talk about a claims commission. I want to back up on that statement since reading your committee report - its major features are so bad I cannot conscientiously ignore them.

The proposed bill provides for the "establishment of a new agency" or bureau - the committee report so states. You know I told you we had ONE too many "agencies" now reaching into every nook and corner of the country where the Indian is or has been and establishing a representative there. These representatives or bureau employees now number upwards of 10,000; notwithstanding the vast army proportion of this group, thousands upon thousands of Indians NEVER see an employee of the Indian bureau, do not know they are on earth; no service whatsoever is rendered them by this vast army of government officials.

Your committee points out that within the "next 50 years" it will effect an "ultimate saving" in bureau expenditures "in the neighborhood of \$750,000,000" as the result of the creation of a claims commission - just how the addition of more expense will result in an "ultimate saving" is a bit difficult for me to understand; the New Deal operates that way, as a result no nation has or has ever had the national indebtedness of our country in all the world's history. Of course, the Indian bureau is supporting your committee report and claims bill. NATURALLY - you make provision therein ("next 50 years") for the retirement of father and mother, permanency of employment of son and daughter, sustained opportunity for a stepup for grandson and granddaughter, and a toe-hold for great-grandson and great-granddaughter - the "next 50 years" is a long time George. The bill and report has many other bad features touching the Indians of your district. The ones to which I have called attention are sufficient to condemn both the bill and report in the eyes of all who believe in justice to the Indians and economy in the conduct of government. I cannot see how any sane honest person, white, red, black or yellow, can see the justice of continuing the Indian bureau another "50 years." And on top of that create a "new agency" with a prospective spending appetite in excess of that of the present bureau or "agency" - and without assurance of a dime's recovery to the Indians in the payment of Indian claims.

When I talked to you at White Oak I told you we wanted a final settlement; you promised that in your party's national platform in 1940 and 1944; that the government could take the money it was wasting on the bureau, give it to the Indians and get rid of the Indians, their claims and the bureau all in one lick. You said Congressmen who did not

have Indians in their distircts did not know anything about Indians and Indians claims, that it would be hard to get them to pay Indian claims that way. I told you to tell them they were already paying out the money but paying it to the wrong man, that they should pay the Indians - not the Indian bureau. You asked me to write you a letter so you could show these congressmen what a "real Indian" thought about this Indian business. This is the letter, and incidentally it is wholly removed from the touch of the worthy "pale face"; it is all from the hand of the red man, flowing exclusively from his mind.

A few words about the competency of the Indian. You live down here - have lived in this District for a quarter-century or more; you know something about Indians; you know there is no difference between them and other races; that they are as capable as other people when opportunity and environment are equal; that your District is alive with Indians, men and women, in every walk of life, highly respected and substantial citizens of the communities of which they are a part; that they are entitled to and receive every privilege accorded other Oklahoma citizens; that they are in all branches of our government, township, county, city, state and national. Yet the Congress, year in and year out, appropriates and turns over millions of dollars annually to our Indian bureau octopus of iniquity on the assumption, as represented by the bureau, it is necessary to the existance and protection of this type of Oklahoma citizen. What an injustice! What a fraud! What an outrage! What an imposition on the trusting public - congressmen and senators appropriating money for their own supervision! Owen did it. Hastings did it. Carter did it. Chandler did it. Curtis did it, though Vice President of the United States - Stigler has and will do so again. I cannot see how any honest man representing the people can excuse himself for his approval of this hypocritical sham of sand-bagging the taxpayer and hamstringing the Indian in his efforts to forever close such a farce.

You know George I said when we were talking at White Oak - "I can't go to Washington and tell the Congressmen the truth about the monkey in this Indian monkey business; that I voted and sent you up there to tell them the truth for me and that if you told them the truth they would know better what to do and I believed would do it." Then is when you said to write you so you could show them the letter. As I have said, here is the letter; show it to these Congressmen who do not have Indians in their districts.

George, as I have twice said in this letter, I cannot come to Washington and tell these Congressmen the truth - that is why I voted for you and sent you to Washington, now you tell them the truth for me.

With good wishes for your success,

Your friend,

Ben Carpenter

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