

Facts About Oklahoma Indians

(Continued from page 1)

During the last seven years nearly 2,000,000 acres of unallotted tribal lands have been sold, the tribal affairs of the Cherokee and Seminole nations practically closed, and the Creek, Chickasaw and Choctaw tribal relations are fast approaching dissolution. Following the disposition of tribal property and the termination of tribal affairs our administrative work in eastern Oklahoma relates chiefly to restricted Indians who, by my order of August 6, 1919, removing unconditionally restrictions on all allottees of one-half Indian blood, now number only 21,213. Their allotments comprising 2,683,819 acres are restricted as to alienation and subject to governmental supervision. The distribution of tribal funds, including payments in equalization of allotments made to the Five Civilized Tribes, now exceeds \$26,000,000.00.

Revenue From Oil and Gas

These Indians have also shared in the recent marvelous returns from oil and gas in the great Oklahoma districts, and up to 1919 there has been collected for the benefit of their individual members from leases and royalties approximately \$32,000,000.00. Income from other sources to that date swells their receipts of individual moneys to \$60,000,000.00. More than 40,000 oil and gas mining leases of restricted Indian lands have been made, and the production of oil alone on such lands from July, 1913, to July, 1919, inclusive, amounting to 157,000,000 barrels, returned a revenue of approximately \$20,000,000.00. Since only about 15 percent of their allotments is now restricted, the mineral returns from all allotted lands are much greater than these figures indicate.

Protection of Indian Minors

There are about 27,000 full-blood Indians in the Five Civilized Tribes, a large number of whom, with others of the restricted class, will need governmental direction for some time in the management of their affairs, and it is my policy to give the property rights of such Indians as these adequate protection, for I long ago discovered that wherever there are incompetent Indians there will be found the unscrupulous ready to despoil them of their possession.

Early in my official term it became apparent that some of the county judges in whose courts were administered guardianships of minors and estates of deceased Indians were not always mindful of this trust. Many guardians were appointed without regard to their fitness; insolvent bondsmen were accepted; lands of minor Indians were sold on appraisements influenced by prospective purchasers or for inadequate

prices; guardians were excessively compensated; unreasonably large fees were paid to attorneys, and the property of Indian children and estates of decedents were being wasted under corrupting influences.

I immediately took steps to reform this condition. Numerous conferences were held with county judges and others interested. They recognized the debasing practices connected with this important branch of Indian administration and earnestly co-operated with all my efforts to effect a system of probate procedure that would adequately protect our Indian wards. Suggested rules adopted by the county judges were approved by the president of the state county judges association and afterwards officially adopted and promulgated by the justices of the supreme court of Oklahoma.

Under these rules the United States could appear in the probate courts only by its attorneys, which necessitated the establishing of a corp of legal representatives known as probate attorneys, each assigned to a particular probate district. There are twenty of these probate attorneys, one of them being a woman. They have many difficult problems with which to cope, especially as to having proper disposition made of funds belonging to individual Indians, as in the oil district, where large incomes are not infrequent. They have been the means of preventing much wasteful extravagance and incompetence by their supervision of probate cases, by checking reports of guardians, requiring new bonds, and in preventing losses to dependent Indian estates worth millions of dollars. There is no more important function of the work of the commissioner of Indian affairs than that involved in the protection of the estates of minor Indian children and in seeing that the property of decedents is conserved and descends to those who are justly entitled.

Citizenship For These Indians

To become a citizen and voter is a laudable ambition upon the part of the Indian and a condition much desired by his wellwishers among the white people. As a race the Indians in Oklahoma are much more entitled to the privileges of citizenship than are the numberless immigrants thronging our ports and seeking admission into our American body politic. I have deeply sympathized with this aspiration of the Indians in Oklahoma and elsewhere throughout the country and at every justifiable opportunity have given them fullest support for emancipation from governmental control.

(To be continued next issue)

Discovering that one of the tires of his auto was flat, John Mason, a Kentucky man, investigated and found that it had been punctured by a gold scarf-pin set with three diamonds. A jeweler assured him that the pin was worth \$300.