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ALASKAN INDIANS OBJECT TO RESERVATION SYSTEM

Through the courtesy of a former student we are in receipt of the February number of "The Alaska Fisherman"—a progressive monthly published at Ketchikan, Alaska, by the Alaska Native Brotherhood Publishing Company, and edited by Louis F. Paul, former Chemawa and Carlisle student. On the front cover page appears a picture of the delegates of the 1930 Convention of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, and they are a fine looking group of clean-cut, forward-looking, up-standing men; and judging from accounts we have read and from what a number of former Chemawa students from Alaska have told us, the Indians of Alaska have a different outlook on life from what we find among our reservation Indians in the States. They resent the idea of being regarded as dependent wards of the government, and especially do they object to what is reported to be a proposed plan to withdraw 650 square miles of the public domain in the Porcupine district of Alaska for an Indian reservation.

Under the caption—"Free or Pampered Citizenship for Alaskans, Which?"—Mr. Paul makes vigorous protest against the reservation system. We quote from his editorial in *The Alaska Fisherman* as follows:

"The land is not being given to the Indians—they are not permitted to own it or any part of it. All that is expected of them is that they forsake their citizenship and all their efforts at self-help, social, moral, political and financial betterment, move inside the fence and remain there as incompetent wards of the present government in the land where their fathers were free men. There a paternalistic government will take them under its all-protecting (?) wing and carefully guard them and shield them from all the buffeting of the winds of chance, from all need for taking thought for the morrow, or any incentive for responsible management of their own affairs. In such an encouraging environment and wholesome atmosphere where youth may be spent in idleness with old age secure, they are expected to develop, quite contrary to every precedent of history, not into helpless hothouse geraniums, but into sturdy oaks and pines ready and able to serve the world and its needs! And the children who are to be reared on this reservation, shielded from every contact with the sterner realities of life,—by what strange process of education shall they be fitted to accept respon-

sible citizenship in the commonwealth we strive to build in Alaska? Segregated and kept from associating with those who choose the more genuine satisfaction of wringing from a hard and stubborn world by their own efforts independence for themselves and their children, how under such circumstances can they ever realize that the whole world honors and respects the man who dares to hold up his chin and say his soul is his own, but despises him who willingly and needlessly begs for a competence or accepts it as a dole from others?"

"In all seriousness then, why segregate the Indians? In the words of the immortal General R. H. Pratt, for twenty-five years head of the famous Carlisle Indian School: 'To civilize the Indian, get him into civilization; to keep him civilized, let him stay.' Compare, if you will, the results of the reservation system in the states, which has rightly been called 'A Century of Dishonor,' with the achievement of the Thlingets and the Haidas of Southeastern Alaska in the past thirty years. From a few scattered warring bands, living as simple children of nature in ignorance and superstition, the Natives of this section have emerged to a state of 'competent, christian citizenship,' and ministers who need not be ashamed in any company.

"They are not asking that reservations be established. Their leaders are not whining for special privileges even though the ancient fishing grounds of their fathers have been gradually taken from them and given to others to such an extent that the native fishermen are today perhaps the poorest paid of all classes of labor in this country. Realizing that two wrongs cannot make a right, and that one special privilege will not justify another, they are asking for themselves and their white brothers that special privileges be abolished and that they be permitted to earn by their industry a decent, honest living for themselves and their families; that they be allowed to take their places in the world of men to stand or fall according to their industry and adaptability and that no allowances be made for their failure or short comings."

We are in complete sympathy with Mr. Paul's point of view and we admire his spirit of independence and his race pride. We believe, however, that he misinterprets the policy of the present Commissioners of Indian Affairs. From what we know of these men we

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