

Council Reports on NCAI Convention

Carrying out a promise made early in their term, the new Tribal Council went to the people October 18 to report on their recent activities, the most significant being the National Congress of American Indians Convention in Dallas, Texas September 18-22.

Eight of the twelve council members, including the three chiefs, attended the convention. Elmer Quinn was chosen as the voting delegate, with Delbert Frank and Gene Green as alternates. Only three councilmen were on hand Tuesday night to offer reports due to other travel commitments, but several committeemen and tribal employees aided in the presentation.

Tribal Council Chairman Gene Greene, who moderated the meeting, pointed to tribal sovereignty and water rights as the key issues at the convention, although each committee and councilman was assigned a particular area of concentration and had very different reports to offer to the general council.

The Council's Report

Elmer Quinn reviewed the format of the weeklong convention, outlining the areas of concern brought to the floor of the general assembly. Among those topics were Indian education, health and social welfare, constitutional amendments, legislation, tribal sovereignty, Indian recognition, reservation development, federal administration, and rules and credentials.

Sixty-three resolutions were passed by the more than 100 tribes present at the convention, reported Quinn. Greene bemoaned the fact that the NCAI has historically not followed up on resolutions, a sentiment that was echoed by management outside the general council meeting.

BACKLASH cast a shadow on most of the NCAI sessions and accented discussions of treaty rights and sovereignty. The seriousness of this hostile response to Indians' recent court successes was acknowledged by

Warm Springs representatives who may have previously felt "it can't happen here."

As Larry Calica (Simnasho) said about backlash, "We're not in the bad situation that other reservations are, but we can't tell when it might come knocking on our door."

The Congress recognized the many opposition groups nationwide that are challenging Indian rights through pressure on Congress and the courts. According to Calica, the message given to the NCAI delegates was that education of the non-Indian public should be a priority so that misunderstanding and fear might not aggravate the situation.

Calica detected a lack of interest in the area of **FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION** out of which no resolutions came; but he predicted that because of the BIA's continued administrative failings, interest would pick up. He pointed to one important outcome of these sessions: the fleshing out of the proposed Intertribal Timber Council that would assist timbered tribes in achieving favorable legislation and marketing practices.

RESERVATION DEVELOPMENT appeared to be a real nuts and bolts segment of the NCAI Convention. Uren Leonard of the Planning Department reported that housing and economic growth on reservations were key topics.

One resolution recommended that more Indian staff be hired to work with the Economic Development Authority, which is a major funding agency for reservation projects. It was also recommended by resolution that all planning for Indian reservations be centralized in one agency.

Another resolution suggested that Indian reservations work more closely with the Environmental Protection Agency which at present works through state governments. Leonard noted that Warm Springs has been contacted by the EPA and together they are working out

guidelines for dealing directly with one another.

Problems that reservations are encountering with HUD were discussed, the biggest one being HUD's construction prototypes or models. Prototype costs haven't allowed for high construction costs on isolated reservations and prototype features haven't always been suited to Indian housing needs.

INDIAN RECOGNITION was a sensitive topic at the convention as various ways of defining what is "Indian" were discussed. Warm Springs representatives opposed a resolution that would give the Secretary of Interior the power to recognize Indians and Indian tribes according to one common standard. As Elmer Quinn said, "I think we can determine who is Indian here by our own Tribal Council."

Leonard informed those at the meeting that Warm Springs is looking into working with the U.S. Census Bureau on this matter.

Two important resolutions were passed by the Sovereignty Committee in the area of **WATER RIGHTS**, according to Water Board member Cy Katchia. One required the Interior Office's Solicitor and the Department of Justice to "cease and desist from violating the constitutional, human and civil rights of the American Indians" in regard to their water rights under the Winters Doctrine. This decision guarantees Indians' rights to use the waters that "arise upon, border upon or traverse" reservations. The resolution refers to the historic conflict of interest within the Department of Interior which administers both federal and reservation water rights, which Tribes insist are distinct.

The objective of the second water rights resolution was the "immediate exercise of Indian water rights to the use of water for beneficial purposes, those rights having been too long neglected."



N.C.A.I. convention delegates making their report at a General Council meeting earlier in October.

Municipal Branch Manager Rudy Clements attended sessions on **INDIAN EDUCATION** which covered a lot of territory. Tribes at the NCAI convention preferred that funds for Indian controlled community colleges, of which there are 12 in the nation, go through federally recognized tribal governments and a resolution was made to that effect.

The Congress proposed an Indian Bicultural Education Act separate from a general act which specifies that funding is only available to those groups for whom English is a second language.

Also recommended was a National Vocational Education Advisory Board for Indian people.

Clements was happy to see handicapped children's interests represented at the convention, especially when the definition of handicapped was broadened to include emotional as well as physical impairment.

A report by the Federal Interagency Commission on Education (FICE) raised questions from the Tribes at the convention about that group's attempt to bring the various federal funding agencies together and find common criteria for the distribution of funds. It was felt that this would make funding less flexible and that it placed an emphasis on administrative convenience rather than meeting educational needs.

Alcohol and drugs, housing and child welfare were topics considered by the **HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE** committee, according to Quinn and Calica. The implementation of Public Laws 437 and 638, which call for self-determination and the eventual assumption of re-

sponsibility for health-related programs by Tribes, received the attention of councilman Delbert Frank, it was learned outside the meeting.

A **CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT** that would have ended the four year limitation on elected officers of NCAI was voted down and a new president was elected. Veronic Murdock of the Colorado River Tribes is the NCAI's first woman president and Mel Tonasket is the vice president, having served as No. 1 for the last two terms.

The **MISS NCAI** contest was referred to often during the course of the general council meeting. Miss Warm Springs Aurolyn Stwyer's successful appearance was a source of pride for the many Warm Springs representatives to Dallas. Aurolyn was chosen first runner-up to Miss NCAI.

A Favorable Reception

After the Tribal Council and other representatives presented their reports and impressions to the crowd of approximately 45 people, the general council had a chance to respond and pose questions.

Bernice Mitchell spoke for many people when she said, "It makes me feel good because this is the first report I've heard in 25 years. We've been sitting in the dark with ear muffs on."

Council Chairman Gene Greene remarked that the meeting had "helped the Tribal Council, too. We brought each other up to date." Greene made a tentative suggestion that in the future, laypersons — those not representing the Council, Committees or Management — be taken along as observers on trips such as the NCAI Convention in Dallas.



"Angle the brush and work in circular motions." Jimmy Wolfe showed classmates Tonya Mitchell and Aaron Smith the proper method of brushing teeth as part of a dental demonstration sponsored by the Indian Health Service. The props were supplied by Health Educator Lee Loomis who also showed movies, and gave students their own toothbrushes (several sizes smaller than the demonstration variety).

(CDS Photo)