

To The Editor

Indian Country Opposes Switch

To the Editor:

"Look at Who We Are, Where Are We NOW, And Where We Want To Go." Quote from conversation with Mohalah (Elizabeth Thompson Pitt)

"Look at who we are..."

We are Indians with a historical background of continuous spiritual contact between us, as Indians, our lifestyles, our religions, our thought, and our Land.

Let us consider the importance of Land before we consider Humankind; Land influenced the Indian in all his and her living hours. Land said, "This is what is offered you as lifestyle. This is the possibilities of your religion, You may feast on the fruits of the seasons. Seasons of Roots, Sweet huckleberries, and running Salmon..." Can you remember when these words were living practice.

In this way the Land, our environment, influenced and aided in shaping Indian thought. The land, as a present, helped us develop a concept of ourselves. There existed a lifelong acquaintance, and mutual acceptance between Indian and Land.

Now, let us consider humankind, and our actions. "...Where are we now..." This is the one question leading into the small series of questions we are putting up for thought now, and later in the General Council Meeting. We are concerned about the talk at these general meetings. They lack any direction by the "General Public", and seem controlled by the talk of money. Everyone seems upset about money. Let us become angry about the human condition on this reservation. Welcome the argument. Make 1978 the time of reevaluation. As a tribe, we must get together and ask questions of each other. Beside the normal concern for your friend, ask him, and The Warm Springs Confederated Tribes these questions. Before you go consider them yourselves.

1. Do you, as an Indian, think that the immense amount of money, alone, will make you happy? Does the money end your search for happiness, liberty, and security?

2. Why have we let our old ways and values slip away from us? Is the Indian a "thing of the past"?

3. Are we melting into "the big melting pot of America"? Do you want to be like the American Joneses?

4. Do you think tribal decisions are made only on a money basis? Are you Individual Indians considered before your Individual Indian account?

5. Are we determining the success of our existing programs on the "white" concept of success, using words such as "gross" and "net", or the Indian concept of success, which mostly the feeling of well being, and survival of our tribe.

6. Do you think our children have a feeling of well being, and the will to survive. Do they get the opportunity to stop "white" education and learn about Indian, Land, and Tribe.

7. Do you think with the amount of monies put into our Mental and Health programs, that they are effective? Do they help the fallen Indian?

8. Do you like to spend large amounts on overcharged items in the local business area. Do you like having to spend more of your working hours to support the lowering standard of living?

Remember the past years of unnecessary deaths, the lack of communication, and concern between School, Work, Family, and the Individual Indians. Feeling small and unwanted in your life makes people seek ways to make up for the lack that is within. Social agencies are designed to help the poor self concept of Individuals, and eliminate stress and the "indescrivable ugly feeling inside." (If you are not blind, you have felt this feeling about the sadness of this reservation.)

9. Is our current society helping us eliminate the helplessness we can feel in watching placing like "Frontier" make money, and reach success.

10. Can our Health programs, Recreational facilities, Land preservation, and Tribal agencies become of the best for human beings instead of books.

Liz Woody, Louis Pitt, and other concerned people on the reservation

TOE NESS

A Politician's promise

"If elected, I will cut down on personal transportation, I'll give up one skate board." YIKES

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You know that there was this high school boy who got kicked out of school for drinking beer. He really learned his lesson and gave up that bad habit. He quit school. YIKES

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There were these two politicians running against each other and one accused the other for using "Marijuana." The second protested the accusation but finally admitted that he had two in twenty years, and added, "That's the best two times I've ever felt." YIKES

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If anyone would like their family tree traced, the cheapest way is to run for office. YIKES

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There were these two guy's playing golf down at Kah-Nee-Ta one day, won't mention any names; one of the guy's really having a bad day. It came to the point when he would yell "fore," his friend would say, "Are you sure?" YIKES

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The lady of the house tried everything to keep the devil out of their home. Finally she started going to church. She would pray that the devil would not bother, but somehow even that didn't help, because her husband would come home anyway. YIKES

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INDIAN TESTIMONY AT HEARINGS OPPOSES EDUCATION TRANSFER:

The Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs heard Indian testimony May 16 on S. 991 the bill to create a new Department of Education. Overwhelmingly, the word from Indian country was that they did not want Indian education programs transferred from BIA to this new department.

The pre-hearings rumor was that the tribal representatives would split, three would be for and three against the move. The All Indian Pueblo Council supported the move, but noted that numerous changes or additions were required to make the new legislation satisfactory.

The Director of the Navajo Division of Education gave conditional support while carefully adding that he was not speaking for the Navajo Tribal Council which would submit its own testimony to the committee. The Mississippi Choctaws, the Montana Tribes, Minnesota Chippewas and Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians were opposed to the move.

National Tribal Chairmen's Association, National Congress of American Indians, National Indian Education Association, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and the Coalition of Indian Controlled School Boards also were against the transfer. The First American Caucus of the National Education Association, as was expected, favored the move into the new department.

The statement of Interior Under Secretary James Joseph could be used for a lesson in diplomacy. It represented the Administration position, as required by White House mandate, but it also included statements about the concerns of Indian people and the need to maintain the integrity of Indian programs.

STATEMENTS ON PROPOSED EDUCATION BILL: The following comments from witnesses at the hearings May 16 on S. 991 are excerpted from submitted statements or, when no quotation marks are used, prepared from reporter's notes.

James Joseph, Under Secretary, Department of the Interior:

The Administration recommends that all federally supported Indian education programs be located together in one agency that reports directly to the Secretary of the Department of Education. This elevation of the leadership of Indian education programs will help to increase their visibility and accountability to the President, the Congress, and to the Indian tribes and peoples.

"Indian tribes, organization and individuals have expressed concern about the proposed transfer of Indian education programs. They are especially concerned about the potential impact on the trust responsibility to Indian tribes . . . We believe, therefore, that an immediate transfer of all Bureau of Indian Affairs programs to a new Department of Education would have a deleterious effect on the delivery of services in the schools.

For this reason, a phased transfer which allows time for working closely with tribes, Indian organizations and parents is recommended . . . We believe that while the integrity of Indian programs must be maintained, there is considerable room for improvement in the quality of services provided and in the opportunities for Indian parents and tribes to mold and shape educational philosophy and process . . ."

Larry Snake, NTCA:

We are in total opposition to the transfer of BIA education programs to this new department. The ability of the tribes to contribute to educational progress is better assured through a tribally centered BIA rather than the state. S.991 makes no reference to tribal involvement or Indian preference. The legislation has been proposed with no consultation of the Indian people, thus making a mockery of President Carter's pre-election promises.

Sam Deloria, NCAI:

We are extremely critical of the way BIA has administered Indian education programs, but we do not favor the proposed transfer. We have seen nothing in S.991 that touches on the trust responsibility, self-determination, Indian preference and other issues. It is as if no one has given any thought to these matters. How can we take a position when there is no indication of how these issues would be handled? This proposed transfer seems to be just shifting boxes around in Washington. It will not simplify or unify Indian education programs; it will make them more complicated. Instead of shifting boxes in Washington, there is needed improvement in delivery system to effect change in the local education programs.

Skip Skanen, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians:

" . . . The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (CRA-64) has been a strong guiding hand over the present Department of Health, Education and Welfare. S-991 also proposes to have the strong guiding hand of CRA-64 over the new Department of Education and its educational activities. Any Indian educational efforts, in keeping with the full compliance of the CRA-64, would be contrary and extremely detrimental to such ongoing programs as Indian boarding schools, tribal schools and in the use of JOM funds in public schools to meet special Indian educational needs as presently administered by the BIA . . ."

The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (PL 93-638) is little more than three years old (June, 1975). The concept of Self-Determination is less than eight years old (July, 1970). These changes plus Indian preference and college educated Indians hold the future of BIA educational program improvements.

Any transfer of BIA educational programs based upon past history is premature at this time. Furthermore, it would largely undo all efforts of Indian Tribes in working cooperatively with the BIA in the education of their children. . . ."

Joseph Dupris, Coalition of Indian Controlled School Boards:

" . . . We must categorically object to the proposal of transferring Indian education programs from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the new Department of Education. The creation of a new Department of Education is not at issue. The inclusion of all Indian education within the new department has the elements of termination of the Federal trust responsibility for Indian people and coercive assimilation to which the Indian tribes and people have and will continue to resist and oppose. . . ."

WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN RESPONDS TO INDIAN CONCERNS ON EDUCATION BILL:

OMB Director James McIntyre made a second appearance May 17 before the Committee on Governmental Affairs to push the White House position on S. 991, the bill to create a new Department of Education. McIntyre's statement seemed to be a White House response to criticisms of the bill expressed in the hearings to date.

Committee Chairman Ribicoff asked one question concerning the transfer of Indian education. He said that the May 16 testimony indicated that many Indians were concerned that the transfer would erode the trust protection and advocacy roles of the BIA. McIntyre said that the transfer would have no effect on this relationship.

The portion of his statement dealing with Indian education follows: "The Director of the Indian Education programs will also report directly to the Secretary. The transfer of Indian Education programs from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the Department of Education will not diminish in any way the trust responsibilities that the Federal Government has toward Indian tribes, and S. 991 should contain strong language to that effect. Also, other special relationships and policies — such as Indian preference in hiring, self-determination, and eligibility requirements for Indian education programs — will not be altered in any way by this transfer.

The Administration is committed to these assurances, and will cooperate with the Committee to ensure that they are carried out. Also to ensure the orderly transition of the overseas dependents' schools and BIA Indian schools, we plan to phase these programs into the new Department over time. Although the Secretary of Education should be in a position to assume educational policy responsibility for the schools at the outset, we believe it will take three years to complete the transfer of the schools to the Department of Education.

These are geographically dispersed activities, and, of necessity, highly decentralized in their operations. We want to make well-informed judgments as we transfer these schools in order to avoid disrupting or confusing their educational and administrative operations. It is also our desire to seek, on a regular basis, the advice of the various parties having an interest in these schools and to keep them informed as the transition proceeds."