

Tribal Heads Issue Open Letter Report On Washington Termination Hearings

Editor's Note—The following is an open letter to members of the Klamath Indian Tribe submitted to the Herald and News above the signatures of Seldon Kirk, chairman of the General Council; Dibbon Cook, Boyd Jackson and Jesse Kirk, all members of the Executive Committee now in Washington, D.C.

On December 30 the Executive Committee of the Klamath Tribe authorized the chairman to appoint at least three delegates to go to Washington from January 26 to February 7 to attend hearings and to meet with government officials. Later that authorization was amended to authorize any or all members of the Executive Committee to go. At that time many of you thought, "Now what is a delegation going to Washington for?" And some of us wondered, too.

Well, as you know, all of us as a tribe are under a new law passed in August, 1954 to remove federal supervision and to permit members of the tribe who wish to do so, to withdraw from the tribe. This law has been amended once. It could and probably will be amended again. As the law stands now there is a chance that if many of the members of our tribe choose to "withdraw" from the tribe (demanding their share of the tribal estate in cash) then we would have to sell whatever part of the reservation it would take to pay those members off. If very many of them decide to do this, the prices would go down drastically because of putting so much timber and land on the market at one time.

In order to prevent having to sell our land and timber at "crash, fire-sale" prices, and in order to preserve the wonderful Klamath forest for future generations, Sen. Richard Neuberger has introduced a bill (S. 2047) whereby the federal government could negotiate with us to buy our entire tribal holdings. Just a few weeks ago, the Interior Department suggested another solution, and that is in the form of a bill in the U.S. Congress. (S. 3051). In the meantime, our congressman, Al Ullman, has introduced still another kind of a solution.

Now it was in order to learn about these bills, to express views, to ask questions, to see what would be the best thing to do, that a delegation to Washington was authorized. This is probably the most crucial time in the history of the Klamath people. It was very important to have representatives here and it will no doubt be necessary to have them here again, maybe several times before Congress takes action or a final decision is made on our Termination Act.

We are writing now to give you a preliminary and partial report on our trip to Washington. As he always does, our attorney, Mr. Glen Wilkinson, will prepare a full report and you should study that report fully. But since we know you wonder what delegates do in Washington, we are going to send this report on ahead now.

Boyd Jackson arrived in Washington on Sunday, January 26, and Jesse Kirk arrived on Tuesday, January 28. They worked with the attorneys studying various proposals and preparing their testimony for the subcommittee on Indian Affairs of the Interior and Insular Committee in the House of Representatives. They testified before

the House subcommittee on Thursday, January 30, on H.R. 9737 which was introduced by Congressman Ullman. At that time our delegates did not have the benefit of the summarized tentative appraisal report, therefore they could not make a positive statement. However, the members of the House subcommittee on Indian Affairs who were present were intensely interested in the developments on our Termination Act and they extended a great deal of courtesy and understanding to our two delegates. They scheduled Boyd Jackson to continue his statement before the next meeting of the House subcommittee set, at that time for February 17-18; now the date appears to be uncertain.

On Friday afternoon, January 31, Seldon Kirk and Dibbon Cook arrived in Washington and met with the above-named executive committee members and the attorney. We knew then that we would not be called upon to testify before the Senate subcommittee on Indian Affairs until at least Wednesday, February 5, but we had to prepare our statement in advance; therefore, we spent our time meeting with our attorney, studying every angle of S. 2047 and S. 3051 in order to arrive at our position and prepare our combined statement. A copy of which our attorney has already sent back home.

On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, February 3, 4, and 5, the following persons testified on Senator Neuberger's bill (S. 2047) and the Interior Department's bill (S. 3051): Under Secretary of the Interior Hatfield Chilton; Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Peterson; Oregon State Senator Quiring and Dave Epps from the Oregon State Legislative Interim Committee on Indian Affairs; Earl Wilcox, forester for the Management Specialists; Mr. Penfold of the Isaac Walton League; L. J. Netzorg of the Western Forest Products Association; Asst. Comm. Rex Lee and Louis Siegler of the solicitors' office in the Interior Department.

* Sen. Wayne Morse gave quite a long statement and one of the

things he emphasized was that he thought the government should be more concerned about paying the Klamath Indians enough for their tribal property. He said he felt that the preliminary summary of the appraisal report was not what should be termed a fair return for the Klamath Indians; that he believed some higher figure should be negotiated and settled on. All of the witnesses who testified during the Senate hearings expressed their views that they would want to see federal purchase carried out.

Under Senator Neuberger's bill the question of values or amounts to be paid would be fully discussed by negotiation with the tribe. Under the Interior Department's bill (S. 3051) the tribal holdings would be divided into parcels and offered to private buyers with the federal government making up the difference in price paid to the Klamath Indians based on the appraisal when it is finally approved.

The hearing record on these two bills (S. 2047 and S. 3051) will be kept open until February 29 for written statements to be added. Several organizations working in the field of Indian Affairs said they will submit written statements.

We want to emphasize over and over that in all our deliberations, we have tried to protect the Klamath Reservation for future generations of Klamath Indians, but if the reservation must be sold we have stood firm for the best possible price that can be obtained for the members of the tribe. We contend that the reservation is worth far more than the price set by the preliminary appraisal report which puts the realization value at about 121 million dollars. This preliminary appraisal report was released to us only Friday, January 31, and we feel that you who are members of the tribe, along with us who are in Washington, have not had ample time to study this report or the bills which were discussed in the House or the Senate subcommittee hearings.

We keep wondering if our folks back home fully realize the seriousness of the situation we are in as a tribe. We keep wondering if all of us fully understand the various choices we have before us. We are asking you to share with us who are in Washington now and with the entire Executive Committee the grave concern we feel as to the decisions that are being made in these months with respect to the future of the tribe. We ask you to study our combined statement and all other documents you have

been given including the last issue of the Klamath Tribune pertaining to P. L. 587 and the various alternatives to it that have been proposed by Congressman Ullman, Senator Neuberger, and the Interior Department.

Every day we are asked "What does the tribe think of this or that?" All of us who are members of the Klamath Tribe must study hard to understand what is confronting us so that we can make wise decisions and take united action. We must be better united, and we must give clear instructions and delegations of authority to representatives we send to Washington. If we do not, other people will make our decisions for us.

We cannot afford to go on sitting around waiting for "the other fellow" to make decisions for us, and then complain and gripe. It is crucial that all of us study all available information and then have patience and courage to take part in the decisions that must be made. When we get back we hope you will be ready with constructive criticism and support.

What we are up against is very complicated, but if we thoroughly understand it, if we cooperate in achieving more agreement than we have had in the past, and if we stand firm, we can accomplish a great deal. We must work together to bring about real understanding of the situation we are in, and make wise decisions so that the generations who follow us will not be able to point the finger at us who are adults now and say we sold the Klamath Tribe out.

In these days we must try to regain some of the courage and faith and ability to cooperate that our forefathers had so that we may hand down to future generations, at least in some measure, what they handed down to us.

On Friday, February 7, our chairman, Seldon Kirk, was received by Master Newman of the National Grange. He pledged to our chairman all possible support to the tribe in its efforts to obtain a fair and honorable adjustment of our Termination Act. On Saturday, February 8, he was interviewed by the Washington Post for a story on our Termination Act and on his trip to this National Capital in 1901 as a Carlisle cadet for the inauguration of President McKinley.

Now about coming home: We thought we should stay over until the House subcommittee hearings on February 17-18 — or whenever Chairman Haley of the House Indian subcommittee again calls upon Boyd Jackson. But Assistant

Commissioner Rex Lee has refused to approve such an extension of our time and so some of us plan to start back February 11. At the close of the Senate hearing, Senator Neuberger ordered to come before the Senate subcommittee a man who wrote a letter saying he was interested in buying the Klamath forest.

Meetings will be called to discuss with the tribe our future

still ahead of us both here in Washington and back home. Many congressmen who will be voting on our matters were not present at the subcommittee hearings. Someone should call on them. However, since the bureau will not grant a further extension we will be coming home soon.

We realize that a great task is

course of action. We are getting you give your best and your utmost right down to the finish line and most to help in making wise decisions.

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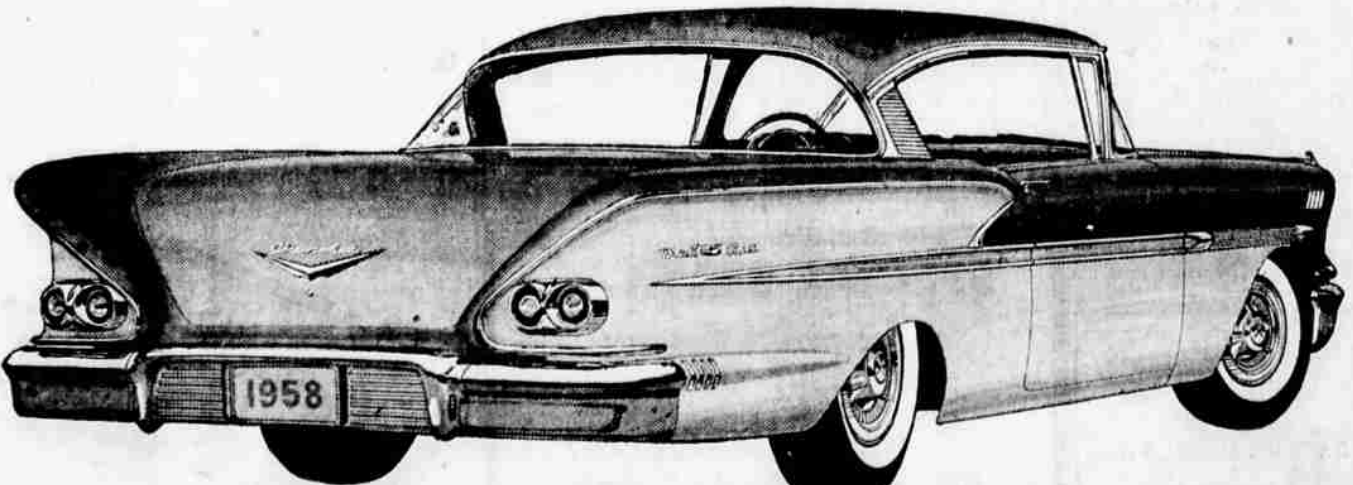
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