

From the Office of:
SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
1313 New Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C.
Capitol 4-3121, Ext. 2424

FOR RELEASE: SATURDAY P.M.'s
MAY 9, 1964

HUMPHREY SAYS AMERICAN INDIAN POVERTY

MIRRORS NATIONAL PROBLEM OF POVERTY

Senate Majority Whip Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) said today that the "critical economic condition of the American Indian is a mirror of the poverty problem the United States faces."

Humphrey said that 400,000 American Indians face serious unemployment, inadequate education, poor housing, disease and income problems that make their reservations some of the nation's worst pockets of poverty.

In a keynote speech opening the four-day American Indian Capitol Conference on Poverty at Washington Cathedral, Humphrey said that "Poverty is the everyday life of the American Indian. No other group in American life is so victimized by poverty."

Humphrey said the average family income for Indians living on reservations is \$1,500 a year and that unemployment is seven or eight times the national average.

"The American Indian is in miserable shape and needs all the help we can give him," he said. "He must be one of the prime targets in the War on Poverty which President Johnson has asked our government and our people to undertake."

Humphrey said the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which has jurisdiction of most American Indian tribes, helped extensively in preparing the anti-poverty legislation President Johnson sent to Congress.

"The experience the bureau has had with poverty, the lessons it has learned, and the principles it has established are providing guidelines for what we must do elsewhere," he said.

He said the bureau has stressed the creation of new jobs and expansion of educational opportunity in its attempts to

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deal with Indian poverty.

"A very high premium is placed upon education," he said. "But it must be good education, focused first on English-language capability, general education for citizenship and vocational education that is marketable."

A high degree of federal responsibility will be an asset in dealing with the Indian problem, Humphrey said, because the government's authority should give it a much more effective base from which to work.

On the other hand, he said, the Indian has a special problem of culture which makes it more difficult to integrate him into the economic life of a modern society rapidly developing in technology.

"The Indian reservations can become excellent pilot projects or models of what can be done, and how to do it, in the war on poverty," he said.

Humphrey said experience with Indian problems also suggested which programs should be done away with. A 1961 study showed too much federal effort was directed to custodial care, he said, and other studies indicated too much money was being spent to educate Indians for life away from reservations.

"Those trained had no opportunities if they returned to the reservations," he said. "If they left they were torn from their people and their people lost the possibilities of new leadership."

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Senator Humphrey's Schedule

Saturday, May 9, 1964

12:00 noon Leave Friendship Airport United #147, DC-8 (lunch served on the plane)
12:47 Arrive O'Hare Airport
1:30 Leave O'Hare United 761, DC6B
3:03 Arrive Des Moines

You will be met by Governor Hughes and a party of people. You will be taken directly to the Savery Hotel.

(Contact: Kirk Boyd, Executive Secretary
of State Democratic Party.

Tel: CH 4-2151, Presidential Suite (Dem.
Convention Headquarters - for Sat.)
279-8736 (home)
244-7292 (Dem. party office there)

Reservations: Hotel Savery, Suite 600-602

Tel: CH 4-2151)

3:30 Clean up and rest.
5:00 Press Conference. Room 300, Savery Hotel
5:30 New Frontier Club Reception, Savery Hotel, Des Moines Room
7:00 Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner. Veterans Auditorium.
You will be taken there by Mr. Boyd or someone he personally designates.
8:00 Approx. time for your speech.

Sunday, May 10

The Northwest Refinery Plane (Erickson's), a twin beechcraft with two pilots, will be waiting at the Des Moines airport to take you to Huron and from Huron back to Minneapolis.

5:20 p.m. Leave Minneapolis Northwest #70, Electra, dinner served

10:05 p.m. Arrive Washington National. Graham will meet you.
Bill will be on the plane with you.

Capital
Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey
American Indian Conference on Poverty
Washington, D.C.
May 9, 1964

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Human Rel.*

Children - struggle

"Poverty and the American Indian"

L Poverty is the everyday life of the American Indian.

No other group in American life is so victimized by poverty.

The average income of Indian families on reservations is \$1,500 a year . . . *L* unemployment is seven or eight times the national average . . . *L* most families live in small huts or hogans with no sanitary facilities . . . *L* young adults stay in school an average of only eight years . . . *L* the Indian life span of 42 years is far short of the national average of 62 . . . *L* Indian babies have only half as much chance as others in this country to reach their first birthdays . . .

I could give you more figures but these point up the problem sharply enough . . . the American Indian is in miserable shape and needs all the help we can give him.

To be sure,

American Indians do not make up a large percentage of the 40 million persons who live in poverty in this country . . . but their small numbers do not diminish their importance. *h* The Indians and their reservations must be prime targets in the war on poverty that President Johnson has asked us to undertake.

and,

We are going to make that move on poverty an all-out war. *h* There is nothing new about the evils of poverty. Its destructive toll on the human spirit--even more than its social cost in welfare and disease--has torn at our sense of justice. What is new about poverty is that it is not necessary.

We are able to do more about poverty than we ever could before. America's resources are so developed that we have the means and the knowledge to bring people into an adequate sharing of our total ^{*social and*} economic life.

Americans no longer have to live in poverty and it is wonderful that this is so. It will be nothing less than criminal negligence if our knowledge, and our resources, are not used to help people help themselves.

∟ Poverty is distributed among different groups and exists in separate pockets. The American Indian represents only one of various special situations . . . each will require a specially developed program.

∟ The American Indian presents a special case in two important respects. First, the federal government is deeply involved because it has the major responsibility for Indian affairs and is the trustee for reservations where the majority of the Indians live. And second, Indians have special cultural problems which make it more difficult to integrate them into the economic life of a modern society with its rapid technological developments.

△ The federal government's authority--and its acknowledged responsibilities for Indian affairs--should give anti-poverty workers an effective base from which to operate.

△ We know that sustained poverty breeds cultural alienation. Educators, for example, now frequently refer to children of the poor in cities as "culturally deprived."

△ One could say the same about the children--coming from poor homes and going to crowded schools--on our Indian reservations.

△ The American Indian, because his cultural problems are so difficult, provides a more critical laboratory in which to learn to deal with ^{these problems} ~~them~~. Indian reservations can become excellent pilot projects or models of what can be done--and how to do it--in the war on poverty.

△ Addressing the subject directly, we might ask how poverty on Indian reservations developed and why it has continued for so long . . .

L-- Reservations are too small to support the number of Indians living on them. Only about two per cent of the 52 million acres in reservations are suitable for farming and--even under the best agricultural management--this land would not provide a living for more than half of the Indian population.

L-- Federal effort in the past has been too heavily directed to custodial care, resulting in little development of the land and its people. A special study group pointed this out in 1961. It indicated we may have been well motivated in the past but were poorly informed.

-- Indian culture has revolved around a limited agriculture and--except for hunting and fishing--has not been job oriented. The relationship of the Indian to the land is deep and mystical. It is more than living space. It is his spiritual home and he doesn't think of it in economic terms.

L-- Education has been inadequate on the reservations and federal policy has diverted most of the funds into preparing Indian young people for jobs away from home. Those that left permanently were torn from their people--and as a result--the reservations regularly lost potential community leaders.

L One word above all others describes the plight of the Indian--that word is "isolation." Indians are isolated physically and geographically. They are isolated economically and socially. The institutions of health, welfare and education have not reached them effectively.

I In recent years more has been done to deal directly with Indian poverty. The Bureau of Indian Affairs has abandoned the custodial idea . . . Congress has voted more money to raise Indian living standards, provide health and welfare services and develop educational and economic opportunity . . . and federal policies have been focused on development of reservation resources and the Indians themselves.

These new policies mean improved housing with provisions for the Indians to build and to own homes. They mean summer work projects for young people and full-time employment for men in road building and forest programs and on soil conservation and irrigation projects. Reservations now are included in Accelerated Public Works and Area Redevelopment programs.

These new policies mean easier credit for tribal enterprises . . . a change that has stimulated industrial development on or near the reservations and broadened the economic base. At least 25 small industries have been developed in the past three years. Indians--using these new sources of capital--now are running small businesses, motels, canneries and sawmills. Bright economic opportunities will continue to develop if these programs are adequately funded and carried through.

L These new policies have put most of the money where it ought to go--into education. The outlays for education make up about half of the expenditures of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The bureau operates a system of elementary, secondary and vocational schools for 47,500 Indian children.

L These schools have a big job in helping Indian children bridge a cultural gap between tribal life and our modern, complex society. They also are faced with the special problem of giving special attention to children considered both culturally deprived and disadvantaged by poverty.

L ^{Some} In other respects these schools face the same problems as school systems elsewhere . . . the need for more classrooms to keep up with the population . . . the need to raise the level of instruction . . . the necessity for better guidance and counseling services . . . the need for better libraries . . . and the need for new methods in teaching English as a second language.

Indian children are not the only persons requiring education. The bureau also has an education program for more than 24,000 adults--only a handful of the under-educated and under-trained on our Indian reservations.

In listing what has been done for the Indian to raise his economic status and improve his general welfare, one can not overlook the U.S. Public Health Service. This agency, in carrying out its responsibilities for Indian health, has included hospital construction in its program. Tremendous improvement has been made in water sanitation although there still is a long way to go. Unsafe water has been blamed in many instances for the spread of communicable diseases that have taken such a toll on Indian reservations.

Life expectancy for Indians is far short of the 62 years now enjoyed by the rest of the population . . . but it has been increased since 1940 by 11 years. The tuberculosis rate for Indians is six times higher than for the rest of the population . . . but it has been cut almost in half since 1954.

It is quite remarkable how the critical economic condition of the American Indian is a mirror of the poverty problem the United States faces. It presents the whole poverty problem in miniature.

[This brief rundown on what the Bureau of Indian Affairs has done to ~~eliminate~~ ^{Combat} poverty ~~from~~ ^{on} our Indian reservations shows why the agency has been able to do so much to help develop President Johnson's poverty proposals for Congress. The experience the bureau has had with poverty, the lessons it has learned, and the principles it has established are providing guidelines for what we must do elsewhere.

This brief rundown also shows that the neglect of the American Indian has been deplorable. However I think we have been able to diagnose the causes of his poverty and now have the proper remedies.

The time has come to wage all-out war on poverty in all sections of this nation. We must be certain that 400,000 American Indians no longer have to face serious unemployment, inadequate education, poor housing, disease and income problems that have made their reservations some of the nation's worst pockets of poverty. We must continue our best efforts until our American Indians are able to participate fully in all the benefits and opportunities of a society that fulfills their old sense of freedom in new terms.

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