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MINNESOTA RADIO TAPE OF MARCH 4, 1964

FOR BROADCAST WEEK BEGINNING MARCH 8

Ladies and gentlemen - -

This is Senator Hubert Humphrey, reporting to you from my office on Capitol Hill, in Washington . . .

Today I would like to report an incident of success after some months of effort and correspondence. It concerns our Indian citizens in Minnesota, and it is a satisfaction to me that I was able to be of assistance.

Last year Mr. Warren Peterson in charge of the Duluth office of the Minnesota Department of Corrections wrote me a letter. I must emphasize that Mr. Peterson did not write to me as an agent of the department, but as a citizen concerned with Indian education and vocational training. He had observed that the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs did grant scholarships to Indians who still lived on the reservations. It aided them to attend such schools as Haskell Institute at Lawrence, Kansas and the Chilocco Indian Vocational School at Chilocco, Oklahoma.

The ~~Department~~ ^{BUREAU} of Indian Affairs, however, apparently gave no such help to Indians who did not live on the reservation. Yet, as Mr. Peterson observed, ~~the situation~~, many Indian people living in Duluth or the Twin Cities were in a far worse situation than those still on the reservation. They had taken the first step to get off the reservation. For many of them this is a big step and a rough one. Yet the Indian youth especially was penalized, as it were, by not now being able to have the same federal help he would have had if he had stayed back in the woods.

Mr. Peterson then looked into the law on the matter and found that there was no Federal law stating that Indians not living on the reservation could not participate in aid from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. There was simply a policy, or a custom, of only ~~thinking~~ ^{TAKING CARE} of Indians if they were at home, so to speak.

So Mr. Peterson wrote to me to see if something could be done. I found his point to be a good one. Employment is an acute problem with the Indian people. Anything we can do about it we should do. So I then wrote to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and asked for a complete re-evaluation of practice concerning the Indian people in vocational rehabilitation and vocational training.

A few weeks ago I had another letter from Mr. Peterson ~~in which he says that results have come.~~ "I am very happy to report" he writes, "that as a result of your inquiry, Indian Agency policy towards helping Indian people has liberalized considerably". The Indian Agency had issued instructions to treat Indians as individuals. The local Indian agency has much broader latitude for decision. Doubtful cases it sends to Washington for processing. But now I am told, many more Indian people are being helped.

There are lots of lessons really in this episode. Something was not being done which should have been done -- but not because there was a law against it. Nobody had been observant enough to spot a situation, and then to follow through with inquiry as to what the rules were. Nobody that is, but a single citizen, who had the initiative to write a letter. That made me write one. The spark jumped back again then from the Indian Agency in Washington to the State of Minnesota.

Not all of the problems of government or of getting things done are quite that simple. But it really helps when people are cooperative. Many, Many problems could be solved almost as simply as this when a single citizen is alert enough to see the obvious, and then ask⁵ for a little help.

Mr. Peterson thanks me for my help. I was a link in the chain and am very glad that I could do what I did. There are other parts of a Senator's job that bring more glory, but none that bring greater satisfaction than being able to help people. But basic thanks go to a concerned citizen. Thanks also go to the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs for a prompt follow-through when something was brought to their attention. None of us has a monopoly on the crystal ball of insight or what needs to be done. When we share a little wisdom and cooperation, it is remarkable what can get done.

Thank you.



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