



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

**Media Contact:** Office of the Secretary

**For Immediate Release:** November 1, 1973

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It is with a great deal of pleasure that I take this opportunity to address the 30th annual convention of the national congress of American Indians.

You have dedicated your convention and its efforts to the goal of restoration of the Menominee tribe to federal recognition and trust status and have adopted as your theme "Restoration now".

It is entirely fitting that this organization, NCAI, meets on the eve of restoration of the Menominee's to celebrate the passage by the house of representatives of restoration legislation and to continue support for the completion of that effort by final enactment into law of that legislation.

NCAI was formed in 1944 when the federal policy had just begun to move away from the first era of Indian self-determination under the Roosevelt administration toward the disaster and trauma of the termination area.

NCA was formed in part of because of a growing awareness among the Indian people that this unhealthy trend in national Indian policy would require a strong united Indian front to counter it.

NGAI grew to maturity in the stormy years of early 2550 when termination descended upon the Indian world with a vengeance.

The Indian people have not easily forgotten the description of those years.

The wreckage of that disastrous Indian policy and the termination language is still with us today.

Phrases, such as "House concurrent resolution 108" and "Public law 230", still have a force and power to cause deep concern and fear among Indian people.

By legislative that, scores of Indian tribes and groups have been forcibly, though too successfully, assimilated into the "mainstream" of American life.

When the true magnitude and scope of the catastrophe of termination became apparent to the Indian people, they rose up in strong opposition to its continuance as this nation's Indian policy.

It was largely due to the efforts of the Indian tribes, united in the national congress of American Indians, that the often uninformed, sometimes malicious drive from termination was blunted in the late 1950 and early 1960s and is, today, on the verge of total, unqualified repudiation.

There are none who can deny that this major shift in national Indian policy represents a major victory for Indian people.

But that victory for the Indian people and an aroused national public was not without its costs.

Not costs merely in terms of dollars and cents, but costs in human misery, cultural alienation, and tribal

destruction.

By the time the active phase of the termination era had run its course, seven major tribes on Oklahoma, Oregon, Wisconsin, Nebraska, South Carolina, and Utah had been terminated. As the architect of termination, Senator Watkins, put it, they had been made "first class" citizens.

President Johnson began his message to the congress on Indian affairs with a recital of the names of Indian tribes, most which now only have meaning as postscripts in the history books or as quaint names of rivers and towns which dot the eastern seaboard.

This was the legacy of a much earlier termination era. Unfortunately, that may well be the legacy of this most recent termination era: once honored and proud Indian tribes. The Klamath and Kathlamet of Oregon, the Ottawa of Oklahoma, the Catawba of South Carolina, and the Alabama-Coushatta of Texas. To be remembered only as postscripts in our children's history books or as the quaint names for rivers and towns dotting the western United States.

That perhaps, is the real tragedy of termination.

While we diligently passed laws to save from extinction the wild horses of Nevada and the black footed ferret of South Dakota, we calmly consigned to that same extinction. The Menominee of Wisconsin and the Klamath of Oregon.

While we purposely enacted legislation to protect the redwood of California and the historic ruins of Mesa Verde in Colorado, we knowingly contributed to the destruction of the pastures of Utah and the Ottawa of Oklahoma.

It is not wrong to preserve and protect the plant and wildlife of our nation but a whole race of people ought to have at least the same standing before the law as a tree or horse.

For some of these terminated tribes perhaps it is too late.

Perhaps they have been pushed too far down the road of historical oblivion.

But for the Menominee, it is not too late.

I take personal satisfaction in reporting to this assembly that it is not too late.

On October 16 of this year, the House of Representatives, by an overwhelming vote of 404 to 3, passed H.R. 10717 restoring the Menominee tribe to federal recognition and trust status.

It will not be necessary here to retell the story of the Menominee, the coerced tribal consent to termination. The ill-conceived, poorly implemented termination legislation. An economic and social plan which has brought the Menominee to the brink of collapse who recovered than the Indian people and leaders represented here today know that termination means.

But for the Menominee October 16 was the culmination of a long hard fought struggle and effort not without its frustration setbacks and despair.

While I am proud to have been a part of that effort many force and personalities combined to bring us to the immanency of success.

Foremost among these is of course my friend Ms. Ada Deer a unique personality and woman of indomitable spirit.

Ada along with other Menominee such as Sylvia Wilbur Lloyd Powless and Shirley Daly, refused to accept defeat and never gave up hope there was after all justice within the system.

Ada and the Menominee were told last year that restoration was out of the question, that there was no hope for reversing termination.

Yet, look at what they have accomplished.

After intensive work on the part of the Menominee, the department of Interior sent forward to the congress a report favoring enactment of restoration legislation.

At the request of Ms. Deer, Melvin Laird, former congressman and present counselor to the president, came out with a forthright statement of support for restoration.

53 members of the house of the representatives of both parties and every political philosophy were persuaded to co-sponsor the legislation which passed the house.

404 out of 435 members voted for its passage.

Prospects for its passage in the senate are very favorable.

Finally, President Nixon, in his message to this convention, urges enactment and assures its signing.

This is a record of which Ada, the Menominee, and all who gave their assistance and support can be proud.

When Vine Deloria testified before my subcommittee on the committee. He said a lot of us have advocated coming to congress presenting our case rather than going on the activist trail we very badly need an act by congress. Such as restoration of Menominee to see the activities that you can work through the system every day face a lot of people in the American Indian movement and other movement and (they) say what have you been able to do going through the system. You haven't gotten anything done you had your chance so we are taking over.

While we Menominee are not yet finally restored I would like to point out what they make acceptable as proof that even in the face of despair and waiting hope. There is an alternative to violence and a hope for justice within the system.

You have taken "restoration now" as the theme of your organization.

I have tried to share with you the aptness of that theme as we move very close to the day when the theme, for the Menominee, becomes fact.

Had the phrase, "restoration now" had no meaning beyond the restoration of the Menominee, it would have been no less important.

But for my part, it had and will have a meaning and impact far beyond the Menominee.

For me, no other act of the congress will more clearly signal to the Indian people across the nation that termination is dead issue and a firmly renounced policy.

I am sure that you have adopted that theme in the same spirit.

The various discussion topics of your convention agenda evidences that your thoughts, while with the restoration of the Menominee, extend far beyond that to the restoration of the many rights and values that make up the Indian life.

It is like for a restoration of a true right of tribal self-government.

It is time to restore to the Indian people a strong, effective tribal government that can well serve the needs of the tribe as a whole protecting the individual rights of its members.

We in the congress are now aware of that need and demand as we move on legislations designed to facilitate that goal.

I have introduced H R 103 which will permit the tribes through contracting to as under control of programs offered for their benefit.

It's time for restoration to the Indian people of the right to have the trustee the United States, truly and honestly rendered protection to their trust resource and assets.

My subcommittee has begun to move on the Indian counsel legislation on which the administration has submitted and which have introduced as H R 605.

The legislation submitted by the administration is admittedly inadequate in many respects but I am firmly convinced that the support and advice of the Indian people we can fashion legislation which will give substance to the legal and moral obligations of the United States as trustee.

It is time to restore to the Indian people the pride of self-sufficiency and the right to develop their own resources rather than leasing them out to outside interests.

My subcommittee has taken up the Indian financing legislation will increase the revolving loan fund of 9 million will create a new loan insurance and guaranty fund to support 100 million in private loans.

To Indians, and authorizes appropriations for an Indian business development fund at a level of \$10 million for the next three fiscal years.

We have refined the legislation which has already passed the senate and will shortly be reporting the bill to the full committee for consideration.

It is time to restore to the Indian people the right to control the education of their children, whether it be in the public schools or in BIA schools.

This control must extend to what is taught, where it is taught, how it is taught, and by whom it is taught.

Indian advisory committees are not enough.

Control must mean control of funds being made available for Indian education and control of the educational programs and curriculum.

It is with this firm conviction that I was the prime house sponsor of the legislation in the 2nd congress which became the Indian education act of 1972.

It is with the same conviction that I will seek to pass legislation in the coming year to bring about needed reform in the BIA educational program and system.

It's time for the restoration to the Indian people of the right to have an effective administration of the programs and funds authorized by the congress for the benefit of the Indian.

The Indian people do not need a BIA that goes leaderless for nearly a year.

They do not need a BIA that operates in an atmosphere of confusion and chaos.

They do not need BIA that drifts aimlessly.

They do not need BIA that is the subject factionalism and power struggles among the bureaucrats and petty politicians.

It is still uncertain that the solution is for the reorganization or reform of the BIA and federal administration of Indian Affairs.

Whatever occurs must occur with the full, prior knowledge of the Indian people and with active consultation.

It is with that view I am giving active consideration to supporting legislation mandating a congressional review of the field of Indian affairs.

Senator Abourezk, chairman of the senate subcommittee of Indian Affairs, has introduced legislation in that regard which I have reviewed.

With some modification, it may well meet the requirements which I see necessary to bring about the end the Indian people have set.

And finally it is time long past time to restore to the Indian people the pride and dignity of being Indians.

The legislative program which I have outlined for you here today will do much to aid in that effort.

The continued efforts of the congressional leadership of which, for my part, I pledge you and the other friends of Indians both in and out of government will and in that efforts.

But in the final analysis, the restoration of Indian pride and dignity depends on the Indian people themselves.

It is through their efforts and accomplishments, working with the tools and resources available to them that Indian pride will be restored.

Who cannot be proud to identify with an Ada Deer whose will and determination has turned around the entire federal government on the question of Menominee termination.,

Who cannot be proud of a Vine Deloria whose well deserved respect among the Indians whose command of the printed word has brought about a renaissance in Indian thought and philosophy.

Who cannot be proud to identify with the Frank Degnans of Alaska upon whose quiet dignity and unassuming resolve was built the successful settlement of the Alaska Native claims.

It is upon the accomplishments of people such as these and the leadership gathered here today that the restoration of Indian pride and dignity depend.

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