

be negligible. There are few exceptions where such income makes a difference so far as the economic status of the group is concerned.

By and large, Indians throughout the United States have no substantial resources to fall back on and, above all, generally lack skills that enable them to fit into the American economy.

You may wonder why the services already provided by the Federal Government are inadequate. I would like to comment on that briefly. There is only one very substantial service that the Federal Government offers American Indians and that is the medical service through the Public Health Service. This is undoubtedly an extremely valuable aid to Indians and something that has done a great deal to bring Indian health standards closer to our national norms.

Mr. PERKINS. Have the Federal programs worked well insofar as they go and have the Indians been discriminated against or has the Federal Government done a good job in administering the present programs, so far as you know?

Mr. SCHIFTER. So far as the health service is concerned?

Mr. PERKINS. Yes; and other programs.

Mr. SCHIFTER. I would like to comment on them, one at a time. So far as health service is concerned, there has been a substantial step-up since 1955 in the kind of assistance that is being given, and there have been very good results.

Indians have come along quite a bit in the last 10 years in terms of improved health conditions. However, they still are way behind the national average.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Chairman, may I ask a question at this point pertaining to health?

I read somewhere, I do not know whether it was in one of my local newspapers or whether it was something that the AMA sent me, but they are blaming, somebody is blaming the poor health conditions and the short longevity of life that the Indians have on the fact that they do receive all this Government medical care.

Could you fill me in a little on what has been the history of medical care to Indians?

Mr. SCHIFTER. Congressman Gibbons, the medical assistance to Indians, goes back for a good many years. It was not really substantial until about 1955 when the Public Health Service took over the responsibility. Whatever assistance there was was helpful, no question about it, but I think the evidence would show, if you just look at what has been going on on the reservations, that where the service has been stepped up the Indians have definitely benefited.

For example, what you have seen in recent years is really the eradication of tuberculosis on the Navajo reservations. Now, that would not have happened if it were not for what the Public Health Service did there.

Another thing is that there has been a very substantial decline in infant mortality. It used to be very, very high. It still is quite high. But there has been a decline just as there has been an increase of the kind of medical services being given. So, I think the record would indicate that whatever help they have received has brought them closer to the national average but they are still far behind.

Mr. GIBBONS. I was wondering, what is the cause of poor Indian health? Is it poverty?