

"In my opinion, there is no other omnibus Indian legislation pending before the Congress that will erase the apprehensions of our Indian people than to see an enactment of Indian rights measures as proposed in S. 1843. Passage of Indian Rights legislation would do more for Indian Tribes in assisting them to initiate and engage with greater efforts, ways to improve social and economic conditions in our Indian communities.

"In view of the fact that Senate approved S. 1843 needs the support of the U.S. House of Representatives, I respectfully request, Mr. President, that you encourage the second session of the 90th Congress to enact Indian rights legislation. The recent Civil Rights legislations have never been explicit in including a comprehensive Indian rights legislation. The opportunity to pass such a legislation is now at hand with S. 1843. I trust that the House will pass Indian rights legislation that is needed and long over due. This is important to the first citizens of this Country."

We would like to reiterate a point lightly touched upon earlier in this statement. The size and diversity of the membership of NCAI, its rapid growth over the past decade and its comparatively unique requirement that its membership be Indian, all attest to its capability in providing a genuine comprehensive and synoptic representation of the concerns of the larger Indian community. Its success in achieving this end arises out of the membership present and growing size and the organizational commitment to seek policies which will *collectively* benefit the membership. To maintain this capability NCAI seeks to encourage legislation which has a collective effect. To pursue legislation in a manner which is selectively oriented to accommodate the desire of specific Indian groups could entail a proliferation of small fragmented efforts whose multiplicity would clutter the legislative calendar to an extent which would protract the execution of legislation which benefits only a few Indian groups with the capability and privileges to get on the legislative agenda first. Should this happen, the Indians of this country would be right back where they started in achieving their rights as citizens with their relative impotency as small segmented groups each seeking what is in effect an individual treaty.

We Indians have been this route before and it has certainly not gotten us very much or we wouldn't be at this hearing today nor would there be a need for the legislation presently being considered. Moreover, we feel such fragmentation of efforts by its very nature would generally serve to impede the programs and processes with which we seek to better integrate the disadvantaged Indian into potential advantages of the American Society. It would establish a precedent which could lead to policies in application of any general governmental program in the areas of economic opportunity, health, education, welfare, et al., where it could be required that these programs submit to individual legislation and negotiation to meet the tailored desires of every particular Tribal group. This conjecture may be excessively negative, but it reflects an alerted concern on the part of NCAI about legislative procedures and philosophies which appear to lean in this direction. As an organization, NCAI feels that it honestly represents the interests of its membership and that its membership, in turn, honestly represents the interest of the larger American Indian community. We also feel that our capability in this dimension is the most legitimate and comprehensive of any organization in this nation.

Speaking from this position NCAI strongly recommends that the Honorable members of this Committee endorse S. 1843 and/or H.R. 15122, for subsequent passage to the House of Representatives.

Submitted by:

JOHN BELINDO.

Executive Director, National Congress of American Indians.

[Telegrams]

ONEIDA, WIS., March 28, 1968.

JOHN BELINDO,
Executive Director, the National Congress of American Indians,
Washington, D.C.:

Copy of following message sent Congressmen James Haley: The Oneida Tribe of Indians Wisconsin Inc., are aware of the House opposition to Amendment No. 430 of the civil rights bill. Please support this amendment which clarifies the constitutional rights of American Indians.

LORETTA V. ELLIS,
Oneida Tribal Secretary.