

It has been a slow process of acculturation which Congress does not hear or feel—the social and political adjustments of one world to the other. I would like to quote a scholar from the COPAN project: “The ideas and experiences that will enable other traditional students to create the synthesis of their own culture and Western culture by enabling them to understand the strengths and weaknesses of both ways of life while at the same time increasing their own personal sense of confidence and self-worth.”

This has been a radical revolution from the old orientation of the United States of America policy that we are going to help the Indians. The American policy was and is “we have to do it for them.” This policy has not worked nor will it work. This has been the policy since the creation of the BIA in March of 1849.

Has the BIA failed? Or has America failed? The BIA has been a microcosm of American commitment to help or enable the American Indian. I cannot blame the Bureau officials but only the American citizens at large who have had this type of policy toward the American Indian. But BIA is its own creation and its commitment and answer to the social, economic and political development of the American Indian under the auspices of Congress.

Historically the Federal government has maintained a responsibility by act of law for the welfare of the American Indians. It was not until 1924 that the Indian citizenship bill was passed. It was not until 1934 that the Indian Reorganization Act was passed. This legislation provided for development of tribal self-government and extended the Federal trusteeship over Indian lands.

Another milestone was the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946 which set up a special commission to hear Indian tribal claims, primarily land claims against the Federal government.

What was the role of BIA with respect to the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946? The BIA had only one resource person, Mr. Charles Jones. Mr. Jones did not travel within Alaska to explain the Claims Act. As a result, the Native people in Alaska were unaware of the Act and very few claims were filed. Those that were filed are the result of individual teachers initiating the claims.

What was its effect on the Native communities? As a consequence of this fact few Alaskan native groups now have cases pending before the Indian Claims Commission. In fact, only the following filed claims prior to the deadline of 1951:

| <i>Docket No.</i>   | <i>Group</i>                             |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 171 (5 claims)----- | Tee Hit Ton Indians.                     |
| 187-----            | Natives of Chitina.                      |
| 199-----            | Athapascan Indians of Stevens Village.   |
| 200-----            | Natives of Tatitlek.                     |
| 278-----            | Tlingit-Haida Indians.                   |
| 284-----            | Gambell and St. Lawrence Island Eskimos. |
| 285-----            | Unalakleet & Unaligmut-Malemut Eskimos.  |
| 286-----            | Shugnak and Kowagmiut Eskimos.           |
| 287-----            | Nisgah Tribe.                            |
| 352 (3 claims)----- | Aleut Community of St. Paul Island.      |
| 369-----            | Aleut Tribe, et al.                      |
| 370-----            | Natives of Palmer, Alaska.               |

Source: Report to the Secretary of the Interior by the Task Force on Alaskan Native Affairs, p. 65.

How has this legislation affected Alaska? Let us examine the Indian Reorganization Act and its effects on Alaska. There are thirty-three community stores that are Eskimo, Indian or Aleut owned and operated. In 1958 a congressional committee was appointed to investigate the Howard-Wheeler Revolving funds in Alaska. The findings were:

1. It has failed to establish any program in the schools, on the job or otherwise to train Indians or Eskimos to assume top managerial positions in what was supposed to be their own business undertaking.

2. It had failed to carry out the Howard-Wheeler Act objectives of fostering the broadening and diversification of the Indian and the Eskimo economic base.

These were criticisms of a senior economist, Dr. George Rodgers, which arose because of the remoteness from the scene and the limited first hand experience of personnel of the Washington office of the BIA, the retention by the office of control over many details of Native owned programs, and conflicts with sound administrative practices. These were the analysis of Dr. Rodgers, a senior research economist at the University of Alaska. But does this mean that the natives cannot manage their own affairs? I simply will state the recent developments of