

SUMMARY

For more than 2 years the members of this subcommittee have been gaging how well American Indians are educated. We have traveled to all parts of the country; we have visited Indians in their homes and in their schools; we have listened to Indians, to Government officials, and to experts; and we have looked closely into every aspect of the educational opportunities this Nation offers its Indian citizens.

Our work fills 4,077 pages in seven volumes of hearings and 450 pages in five volumes of committee prints. This report is the distillate of this work.

We are shocked at what we discovered.

Others before us were shocked. They recommended and made changes. Others after us will likely be shocked, too—despite our recommendations and efforts at reform. For there is so much to do—wrongs to right, omissions to fill, untruths to correct—that our own recommendations, concerned as they are with education alone, need supplementation across the whole board of Indian life.

We have developed page after page of statistics. These cold figures mark a stain on our national conscience, a stain which has spread slowly for hundreds of years. They tell a story, to be sure. But they cannot tell the whole story. They cannot, for example, tell of the despair, the frustration, the hopelessness, the poignancy, of children who want to learn but are not taught; of adults who try to read but have no one to teach them; of families which want to stay together but are forced apart; or of 9-year-old children who want neighborhood school but are sent thousands of miles away to remote and alien boarding schools.

We have seen what these conditions do to Indian children and Indian families. The sights are not pleasant.

We have concluded that our national policies for educating American Indians are a failure of major proportions. They have not offered Indian children—either in years past or today—an educational opportunity anywhere near equal to that offered the great bulk of American children. Past generations of lawmakers and administrators have failed the American Indian. Our own generation thus faces a challenge—we can continue the unacceptable policies and programs of the past or we can recognize our failures, renew our commitments, and reinvest our efforts with new energy.

It is this latter course that the subcommittee chooses. We have made 60 separate recommendations. If they are all carried into force and effect, then we believe that all American Indians, children and adults, will have the unfettered opportunity to grow to their full potential. Decent education has been denied Indians in the past, and they have fallen far short of matching their promise with performance. But this need not always be so. Creative, imaginative, and above all, relevant educational experiences can blot the stain on our national

conscience. This is the challenge the subcommittees believes faces our own generation.

This Nation's 600,000 American Indians are a diverse ethnic group. They live in all 50 States and speak some 300 separate languages. Four hundred thousand Indians live on reservations, and 200,000 live off reservations. The tribes have different customs and mores, and different wants and needs. The urban Indian has a world different from that of the rural Indian.

Indian children attend Federal, public, private, and mission schools. In the early days of this republic, what little formal education there was available to Indians was under the control of the church. Gradually, however, as the Nation expanded westward and Indian nations were conquered, the treaties between the conquering United States and the defeated Indian nation provided for the establishment of schools for Indian children. In 1842, for example, there were 37 Indian schools run by the U.S. Government. This number had increased to 106 in 1881, and to 226 in 1968.

This pattern of Federal responsibility for Indian education has been slowly changing. In 1968, for example, the education of Indian children in California, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin was the total responsibility of the State and not the Federal Government.

In 1968, there were 152,088 Indian children between the ages of 6 and 18. 142,630 attended one type of school or another. Most of these 61.3 percent—attended public, non-Federal schools with non-Indian children. Another 32.7 percent were enrolled in Federal schools, and 6.0 percent attended mission and other schools. Some 6,616 school-age Indian children were not in school at all. The Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior, the Federal agency charged with managing Indian affairs for the United States, was unable to determine the educational status of some 2,842 Indian children.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs operates 77 boarding schools and 147 day schools. There are 35,309 school-age Indian children in these boarding schools, and 16,139 in the day schools. Nearly 9,000 of the boarding-school children are under 9 years old.

In its investigation of "any and all matters pertaining to the education of Indian children" (S. Res. 165, August 31, 1967), the subcommittee thus was compelled to examine not only the Federal schools, but the State and local public schools and the mission schools as well.

What concerned us most deeply, as we carried out our mandate, was the low quality of virtually every aspect of the schooling available to Indian children. The school buildings themselves; the course materials and books; the attitude of teachers and administrative personnel; the accessibility of school buildings—all these are of shocking quality.

A few of the statistics we developed:

Forty thousand Navajo Indians, nearly a third of the entire tribe, are functional illiterates in English;

The average educational level for all Indians under Federal supervision is 5 school years;

More than one out of every five Indian men have less than 5 years of schooling;

Dropout rates for Indians are twice the national average;

In New Mexico, some Indian high school students walk 2 miles to the bus every day and then ride 50 miles to school;

The average age of top level BIA education administrators is 58 years;

In 1953 the BIA began a crash program to improve education for Navajo children. Between then and 1967, supervisory positions in BIA headquarters increased 113 percent; supervisory positions in BIA schools increased 144 percent; administrative and clerical positions in the BIA schools increased 94 percent. Yet, teaching positions increased only 20 percent;

In one school in Oklahoma the student body is 100-percent Indian; yet it is controlled by a three-man, non-Indian school board.

Only 18 percent of the students in Federal Indian schools go on to college; the national average is 50 percent;

Only 3 percent of Indian students who enroll in college graduate; the national average is 32 percent;

The BIA spends only \$18 per year per child on textbooks and supplies, compared to a national average of \$40;

Only one of every 100 Indian college graduates will receive a masters degree; and

despite a Presidential directive 2 years ago, only one of the 226 VBIA schools is governed by an elective school board.

These are only a few of the statistics which tell the story of how poor the quality of education is that American Indians have available to them. Running all through this report are many others, which are some measure of the depth of the tragedy. There are, too, specific examples of visits we made to various facilities in the Indian education system. These are too lengthy to summarize; however, the subcommittee believes that their cumulative effects is chilling.

We reacted to our findings by making a long series of specific recommendations. These recommendations embrace legislative changes; administrative changes; policy changes; structural changes—all of which are geared to making Indian education programs into models of excellence, not of bureaucratic calcification.

We have recommended that the Nation adopt as national policy a commitment to achieving educational excellence for American Indians. We have recommended that the Nation adopt as national goals a series of specific objectives relating to educational opportunities for American Indians. Taken together, this policy and these goals are a framework for a program of action. Clearly, this action program needs legislative and executive support if it is to meet its promise. Most of all, however, it needs dedicated and imaginative management by those Federal officials, and State and local officials as well, who have the principal responsibilities for educating American Indians.

We have recommended that there be convened a White House Conference on American Indian Affairs. We have recommended—although not unanimously—that there be established a Senate Select Committee on the Human Needs of American Indians. We have recommended the enactment of a comprehensive Indian education statute, to replace the fragmented and inadequate education legislation now extant. We have recommended that the funds available for Indian education programs be markedly increased.

One theme running through all our recommendations is increased Indian participation and control of their own education programs. For far too long, the Nation has paid only token heed to the notion

that Indians should have a strong voice in their own destiny. We have made a number of recommendations to correct this historic, anomalous paternalism. We have, for example, recommended that the Commissioner of the BIA be raised to the level of Assistant Secretary of the Department of Interior; that there be established a National Indian Board of Indian Education with authority to set standards and criteria for the Federal Indian schools; that local Indian boards of education be established for Indian school districts; and that Indian parental and community involvement be increased. These reforms, taken together, can—at last—make education of American Indians relevant to the lives of American Indians.

We have recommended programs to meet special, unmet needs in the Indian education field. Culturally-sensitive curriculum materials, for example, are seriously lacking; so are bi-lingual education efforts. Little educational material is available to Indians concerning nutrition and alcoholism. We have developed proposals in all these fields, and made strong recommendations to rectify their presently unacceptable status.

The subcommittee spent much time and devoted considerable effort to the "organization problem," a problem of long and high concern to those seeking reform of our policies toward American Indians. It is, in fact, two problems bound up as one—the internal organization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the location of the Bureau within the Federal establishment. We made no final recommendation on this most serious issue. Instead, because we believe it critically important that the Indians themselves express their voices on this matter, we have suggested that it be put high on the agenda of the White House Conference on American Indian Affairs. Because, as we conceive it, this White House Conference will be organized by the Indians themselves, with the support of the National Council on Indian opportunity, it is entirely appropriate that this organization problem be left for the conference.

In this report, we have compared the size and scope of the effort we believe must be mounted to the Marshall plan which revitalized postwar Europe. We believe that we have, as a Nation, as great a moral and legal obligation to our Indian citizens today as we did after World War II to our European allies and adversaries.

The scope of this subcommittee's work was limited by its authorizing resolution to education. But as we traveled, and listened, and saw, we learned that education cannot be isolated from the other aspects of Indian life. These aspects, too, have much room for improvement. This lies in part behind the recommendation for a Senate Select Committee on the Human Needs of American Indians. Economic development, job training, legal representation in water rights and oil lease matters—these are only a few of the correlative problems sorely in need of attention.

In conclusion, it is sufficient to restate our basic finding: that our Nation's policies and programs for educating American Indians are a national tragedy. They present us with a national challenge of no small proportions. We believe that this report recommends the proper steps to meet this challenge. But we know that it will not be met without strong leadership and dedicated work. We believe that with this leadership for the Congress and the executive branch of the Government, the Nation can and will meet this challenge.