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INDIAN WOMEN ORGANIZE

AN IMPORTANT EVENT took place in Seattle September 10th, when a group of Indian women gathered together for the first meeting of the AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN'S SERVICE LEAGUE. The creation of this new group is in the spirit of the nation-wide movement toward increased unity among American Indians.

With so many problems to solve, they are now aware that it will be easier and faster to solve them together, with the strength of the entire group exerted against a difficulty, instead of each woman's trying futilely by herself.

The purpose of the organization is to deal with critical situations within the scope of women's activities--those affecting children, health, housing, etc. There was no lack of subject matter for consideration, with informal group discussion bringing out many topics which have been troubling these women for a long time. Securing Indian foster homes for orphaned Indian children was of great concern to all. The number of available homes is at present far too few for the number of children who must be placed. Experience has shown that when Indian children are mixed in a foster home with children of other racial backgrounds, the former, being more retiring, are often relegated to an inferior status, and--feeling unloved--become lonely and unhappy.



another need, which is constant, is clothing for children and adults whose income is too low to provide wearing apparel decent enough for school and job. Obviously, if one lacks respectable clothing in which to apply for and hold down a job, it is impossible for him to obtain the funds to pull himself up out of his economic dilemma. Indians are caught up in too many of these vicious circles—lack of money, lack of education—which keep them perpetually at the bottom of the ladder. Indian patients discharged from Finland's Tuberculosis Sanitarium have frequently emerged into the outside with no more clothing than that on their backs, and no place to go.

It is the plan of the organization to establish some kind of central clearing-house — at first, probably, at a member's home — where a stranded Indian, or one in need of any kind of help, may call and receive aid or information. Even just a friendly and sympathetic contact with other Indians might often be sufficient uplift to carry a newcomer through a difficult period. One lack hereabouts is a temporary shelter for destitute women—Indian or otherwise. Men temporarily without funds may get lodging at any of several missions, at the Salvation Army, etc., but they have no accommodations for women.

Another obstacle to overcome is the frequent lack of comprehension of Indian troubles by government agency social workers; also the Indians' own lack of information as to what agency he should apply for help, and how. It is planned to invite social workers from the various agencies to future meetings, and thus create a better mutual understanding. A census of Indian families in the local area is also planned.

The meeting was held at the Washington State Museum. Dr. Erna Gunther, its director, and Mrs. Betsy Trick were hostesses for the occasion. Dr. Gunther offered to serve as ad-

visor for the organization until it is well-launched and self-sustaining. The Indian leader of the group is Mrs. Pearl Warren, a Makah. Many Indian tribes were represented, including some from the mid-west. Also attending were several non-Indian women who are concerned with these problems.

Two great contrasts in Indian life were in evidence that evening. These women, gathered together for more than just a social time—although they had that, too—represented the contemporary Indian wife and mother who is trying to get along in a difficult world of white ways and rules, and half-remembered observances of the old tribal ways. In the background stood the silent museum displays of their ancestors' possessions, from a day when Indian life was rich and rewarding, and a tribesman felt secure in its well-defined pattern. Now the pattern is all but obliterated, yet the white way of life has never opened out its arms to include the native American as an equal human being. Consequently, the Indian lives in a fringe-world, denied the chance to participate fully in either world.

How, then, can the contemporary Indian woman learn to bridge the gap between the old generations and the next? Granted that it is another "Operation Bootstrap," she can, by joining with others and pooling ideas and efforts, accomplish a great deal to change and improve the environment of her children and of her children's children.

The next two meetings will be September 24, and October 8, at 7:30, at the Washington State Museum, 15th Ave. N.E. and Campus Way, across the street from the U of W campus. All Indian women living in or near the Seattle area are cordially invited to attend. If you need a ride, or can give one, call Mrs. Warren at MA 4-0223.

"MAKAH DAY"

The sun was warm and cooperative at Neah Bay as the Makah Indian Tribe celebrated annual "Makah Day" on August 23rd. It was a colorful festival with many activities—sports went in the afternoon on the sandy beach and in the water; dinner later in the community hall; and in the evening—the highlight of the festivities—traditional Makah songs and dances. Accompanied by male voices and the steady beat of the drum, the dancers—men and women—moved through one dramatic form after another for several hours.

All the dances were enjoyable to watch, but one of the most spectacular and unusual, and apparently a favorite with the audience, was the Canoe Dance. The song to which this dance is set came to a long-ago Makah during an illness in which he dreamed a canoe brought him home and he became well. In the dance, about a dozen women and girls, each holding paddles, stood one behind the other in a row across the stage; between them and the spectators was stretched waist-high a great cloth on which was painted a beautiful, life-size canoe. Then, all singing, they paddled in unison; and although there was no movement other than the rhythmic stroking, one could

easily imagine he saw the canoe with its feminine crew gliding across the water.

"Makah Day" originated about thirty years ago when a member of the prominent Wanamaker family in the east offered an American flag to any Indian tribe who desired one. Luke Markishtum, father of the present chairman of the Makahs, wrote to Mr. Wanamaker and requested one. The flag came, was presented with due ceremony, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which up to then had forbidden the performance of tribal rites and dances, relaxed its rules and announced that each year on the anniversary of the presentation the Makahs could celebrate in any way they chose. "This will be your day," they said, and so it was. Each August ever since, the tribe has honored "Makah Day" with feasts and entertainment. Eustace Markishtum, another son of the man whose initiative created a new holiday, and who himself ably officiated as Master of Ceremonies at this year's events, said he could remember as a boy that the dancing commenced about eight in the morning and continued until far into the night. Alas for changing times; an evening now suffices. But a concentrated evening, of a thrilling spectacle that is one of the rare treasures of the Northwest.

The Indian children from the Tulalip Reservation who attend the Marysville Public Schools in western Washington should find their teachers far better informed on their problems this fall, thanks to the prodigious work of three women from the Everett Unitarian Fellowship.

Distressed by conditions on the reservation and wanting to do something about them, they concluded after much inquiry that the most lasting results would come from encouraging the education of the children. For those well-informed on the subject declare that **THE GREAT SHORTAGE OF CAPABLE INDIAN LEADERS SEEMS TO BEAR A DIRECT RATIO TO THE APPALLING NUMBER OF INDIAN YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DO NOT HAVE AN ADEQUATE EDUCATION.**

One reason for this is poor school attendance and early drop-outs. An incentive for continuous schooling and ways of removing obstacles to it apparently had to be provided. As most Indian parents are themselves trapped in the apathy and hopelessness of four or five generations in a disrupted society, they seldom can instill this incentive in their children. But the teachers, also in close, daily contact with them, might. That is, if they were thoroughly aware of the inherent differences in an Indian's thinking and feeling, due to his cultural background, and of the trying and frustrating conditions under which he exists. Mere goodwill alone would not suffice. But the sympathy and affection which come with real understanding might create self-confidence in a little Indian child and help him to succeed well enough in school to enjoy being there.

To supply some of this information which unfortunately most non-Indians do not possess, these three women compiled a fourteen-page pamphlet, copies of which were given, with the approval of the superintendent, to all the teachers of the Marysville schools. This pamphlet is the result of over a year's work of inquiry, discussion, study of countless books and articles, and many long hours of writing. Titled "NORTHWEST INDIANS IN TRANSITION," it covers the essentials of pre-white Indian culture, the history of government-Indian relations from early times to the present, Indian economic, health and social problems, and various current attempts to alleviate them. A list of well-selected material for further study is also included.

We of the NEWS consider this thoughtful pamphlet to be one of the most outstanding contributions to the advancement of understanding between races that we have yet seen. Betty Bartlett, chairman of the committee, and Velma Hall and Tam Deering are to be highly commended. This is a document that could—and should—be adapted for use in all other communities in the United States where Indian problems exist. The authors have no objection to this; in fact, they would welcome it. We believe, too, that many Indians, no less than non-Indians, will find it enlightening and extremely interesting. Copies may be obtained by writing to Mrs. E.W. Hall, 6206 Fleming Road, Everett, Washington. For each copy, please send fifteen cents to cover postage and printing costs.

Here are a few excerpts from the pamphlet:

"The committee does not assume to 'know' the answers."

"The Indian child...has all the problems of any child from a low-income group, but also...the problems generated by the conflict of two cultures. His people have (had to discard) a way of life without help in retaining what was especially fine in their former culture so they might always have a sense of pride in being 'Indian.' It is a sad fact that not only white children know little of the Indian's heritage, but...today's Indian child himself has little knowledge of it. Hence he does not have the opportunity to develop a sense of value about himself, and feel acceptable as an individual."

"The (Northwest) Indian had never had to cultivate the soil for food, for nature had provided generously. The white man reasoned that since farming was outdoor work, it was suited to outdoor people. But farming could not give the companionship of the big houses, and fishing, hunting and gathering trips. The white agent was in absolute authority... the Indians were allowed no responsibility for their own affairs. When Indians were treated as irresponsible children, personal disintegration was the natural result. Sociologists point out that whenever a people have their traditions rapidly removed, are not given adequate substitutes, or helped to make their own decisions...self-destructive, hostile and apathetic attitudes develop."

"The outstanding problem of Indian children is poverty. Contrary to popular belief, Indians do not have pensions. The per capita annual income of western Washington Indians is about \$750.

"The Indian child probably comes to school poorly nourished. There are children on the Tulalip Reservation who have had no milk since infancy, and are perpetually hungry."

"The tuberculosis rate for Indians is 8 times that of whites. Lack of transportation is an obstacle to making full use of health services which are available."

"An Indian child with the health and social problems many live with can easily carry to his school experiences feelings of incompetence, apathy and inadequacy."

Some interesting material available for classroom teaching of Indian history and customs: "Indians of Puget Sound" and "A Puget Sound Winter Village." Only cost is the return expense. Write to Washington State Museum, 4037 15th Ave. N.E., Seattle 5 Washington.

ROLAND CHARLEY

Roland Charley, the last chief of the Chinook Tribe, passed away this summer. To all who know him, he will long be remembered for his great dignity and integrity, and for his inspiring example as a fine representative of the Indian race.