

# THE AMERICAN INDIAN CHICAGO CONFERENCE

One night in early June of this year, an urgent message went across the country: "To All American Indians," it read, "the 'termination policy' is dead; Secretary Udall and Assistant Secretary Carver have said so very clearly. Nothing more should happen in Indian affairs without full Indian understanding and consent! The new administration in Washington . . . have to work out a new Indian Affairs policy. There is no Indian Affairs policy now. Therefore right now is a rare opportunity for Indians to express themselves, instead of having somebody else speak for them. This is why I have tried hard to make this national conference possible at this time."

So, 185 years after the Declaration of Independence and 85 years after Custer's Last Stand, began a pronouncement from headquarters of the American Indian Chicago Conference. A publicity release of the University reported shortly thereafter, "The vast enterprise was conceived by Sol Tax, professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago, who acted as coordinator of arrangements." Declared Professor Tax, "My job as Coordinator is almost finished . . . It is now plain to see that this nationwide Conference of American Indians is a major event in the history of our country."

Within two weeks, 460 Indians from 90 tribes descended upon the Midway and with the help of the University of Chicago (\$10,000), the Emil Scharzhaupt Foundation (\$10,000) and the Wenner-Gren Foundation (\$5,000) proclaimed an Indian creed and a set of legislative proposals. They began with a Calumet peace pipe ceremony and dance (not to be confused with the present-day Calumet City dance), and a Welcome Feast at the University's stadium, Stagg Field, where whole steers were roasted over open-pit fires. They viewed a ball game at Comiskey Field and held native religious cere-

monies at Stagg Field well into the night of June 17, with a Pow-Wow and Dance Contest on the next afternoon.

A drafting committee of 15 Indians working at the U. of Chicago had met in April and issued a preamble and preliminary statement. Prior to the Conference, Professor Tax explained the Indian pattern of slow, full and complete deliberation: "Indian practice often requires everyone to be heard on an issue. Majority rule in

**NATION-WIDE AMERICAN INDIAN**

## POW WOW

and

### INDIAN DANCE CONTEST

**\$500**

in prizes

Proceeds for the  
INDIAN SUBSIDY  
FOR AICC

Held at the University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

<p><b>INDIVIDUAL DANCING CONTEST</b></p> <p>1st Prize: \$100 2nd Prize: 50 3rd Prize: 25 Honorable Mention: 10 Removable Number: 10</p> <p><b>DANCE GROUPS CONTEST</b></p> <p>1st Prize: \$100 2nd Prize: 50 3rd Prize: 25</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p><b>JUNE</b></p> <p><b>18</b></p> <p><b>1961</b></p> <p><b>2 p.m.</b></p> </div>	<p><b>BEST AUTHENTIC COSTUME</b></p> <p>1st Prize: \$25 2nd Prize: 15 3rd Prize: 10</p> <p><b>WOMEN</b></p> <p>1st Prize: \$20 2nd Prize: 10 3rd Prize: 5</p> <p><b>Men's Prize: 10</b></p> <p><b>Girl's Prize: 10</b></p> <p><small>INDIAN DANCERS ONLY ALL INDIANS WANTED NO CONTEST REGISTRATION FEE</small></p>
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*The Voice of the American Indian*

AMERICAN INDIAN CHICAGO CONFERENCE

many situations is not enough: unanimity must be reached." This was accomplished during the conference, at the conclusion of which a final Declaration of Indian Purpose was released, differing in a few minor respects from the drafting committee's statement.

Reporting again "To All American Indians" shortly after the Conference, as "Co-ordinator," the position which he apparently had resumed after his earlier resignation, Professor Tax quoted cordial, if non-committal letters, from the Secretary of the Interior and Senate Constitutional Rights Subcommittee and said "It is a pleasure to report that the Conference went very well. . . . AICC is history; but the fulfillment of all of its aims is still to come."

The aims of the Conference, as contained in the final declaration, are: the "termination policy" of 1953 must be rescinded; this Congressional resolution sought to give all rights as Americans to the Indians and declared: "They should be freed from Federal supervision and control and from all disabilities and limitations specially applicable to Indians." Instead federal officials, with strong individual authority in the different areas, should carry out a broad program of educational, social, and economic development of the Indians. "Economic assistance to Indian tribes and their members," legislative assistance, including the inducements to industries to locate plants . . . near Indian reservations," "technical assistance," "funds to cover the costs of preparing plans and estimates similar in operation to a point IV plan," "land purchase funds," and "adequate revolving loan funds" were urged. Sporadic short-term aid should be avoided. There should be "preference to Indians in Bureau of Indian Affairs employment," and preference in job opportunities and exemption from union requirements in any contracts to work on projects in Indian reservations. Any reservation consumer services such as bakeries should be taken away from private contractors and given to the BIA. Also asked: Federal assistance in purchasing homes; federal education programs; complete federal health, medical, and dental services; "education not only in terms of classroom teaching, but a process which begins at birth and continues through a life span." The federal government must cease "the repeated breaking of solemn treaties;" the Bureau of Internal Revenue must stop collecting income taxes from Indians.

"In short, the Indians ask for assistance, technical and financial, for the time needed, however long that may be, to regain in the America of the space age some measure of the adjustment they enjoyed as the original possessors of their native land."

The unanimity was probably not complete. A lone-wolf Indian from Albuquerque wrote the Secretariat: The American Indian Chicago Conference "is so absurd and preposterous . . . any attempt to revivify and sanction an antiquated and superannuated way of life is to impede his progress toward individual responsibility and self-improvement."

The Indian problem is heavily socio-psychological. It contains many a lesson for America's foreign aid program. Can what has *not* been done with a century of experience at home be done abroad? The anthropologist may well ask himself: Is more state *wampum* our only policy after a century of profound cultural studies? Else others will ask: How much applied anthropology can the country afford?

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