

Senator Burton K. Wheeler, Chairman,  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs,  
Washington, D. C.

751-2  
11-30-11

My dear Senator:

Referring to our conference in San Francisco on October 31st, where you invited me to meet you, I am submitting to you, in compliance with your request, this brief statement of the conditions of the California Indians in this jurisdiction together with suggestions for their improvement.

In the first place, it should be stated that the situation of the Indians under this Agency differs from that in any other part of the State or Nation where large numbers are affected. Here the Indians were ruthlessly and utterly dispossessed by the early gold miners, and unlike Indians in the extreme Northwestern and Southern parts of the State, no Executive Order, or other reservations were ever provided for those living in the Sacramento and Joaquin valleys and along the Sierra foothills. It was in this section of the State that the great gold discoveries were made and this part of California became, almost over night, the recipient of a tide of immigration unexampled in the history of this country. Practically all of the fertile valleys were seized and overrun with miners with no recognition whatever of the rights of the Indians who were cruelly dispossessed of their homes, their hunting grounds, their fisheries and every means they possessed of making a living. From a condition of self-supporting, free men they were at once reduced to a state of peonage, in many cases were sold into slavery, and thus despoiled of the lands of their fathers and ground down into the earth by irresistible force, they have been almost compelled to become vagabonds and pitiable objects of destitution, want and misery.

In an effort to provide land on which these Indians might live undisturbed, about thirty years ago Congress began making appropriations for the purchase of homesteads for them. As a result numerous small tracts called rancherias have from time to time been purchased for small groups, scattered over this large area. Following is a list of those so-called rancherias in this jurisdiction:

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INDIAN RANCHERIAS UNDER SACRAMENTO AGENCY:

1. AMADOR COUNTY (125 Indians)

Buena Vista, 70 acres, 1 home and small spring; only one old man living on this land; 90 others living in rude shacks on nearby privately owned land.

Jackson, 330 acres, 2 houses, spring, some garden land. Most of this land is covered with brush and timber.

2. BUTTE COUNTY. (377 Indians)

Mooretown, 80 acres; only few Indian families living here in rude shacks.

Enterprise, 80 acres, same as above.

Berry Creek, 40 acres; only one Indian family on this land.

3. CALIFORNIA COUNTY (125 Indians)

Sheepbranch, 2 acres, poor land, no water, four shacks occupied by four families.

4. COLUSA COUNTY (107 Indians)

Celus, 40 acres. Good land, poor houses, no irrigation.

Cortina, 430 acres, rough mountain land, no water, Indians live in rudest sort of shacks.

5. ELDORADO COUNTY (144 Indians)

Shinglesprings, 240 acres, fairly good land, good spring, vineyard--only one family living on this land.

6. FRESNO COUNTY (652 Indians)

Big Sandy, 280 acres. In urgent need of water supply.

Several families live here in poor houses.

Table Mountain, 160 acres, poor, rocky land, no dependable water supply.

Cold Springs, 160 acres, poor land, one family living here; little water.

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7. GLYNN COUNTY. (31 Indians)

Grindstone, 60 acres, some good land, no good drinking water; some creek water for irrigation. Several families live here in rude shacks.

8. KINGS COUNTY. (162 Indians)

Santa Rosa, 60 acres, poor homes, inadequate water.

9. LAKE COUNTY. (377 Indians)

Upper Lake, 143 acres good land, no water or improvements,

East Lake, 108 acres good land, no water; very poor homes.

Middletown, 103 acres, mostly needed poor improvements.

Scotts Valley, 56 acres, very rough land, no water.

Big Valley, 80 acres, excellent land, very poor homes; no water.

Sulphur Banks, 60 acres unimproved, no water and no Indians living on it.

Cache Creek, 160 acres, mostly timbered land, good spring, very poor houses.

10. LASSER COUNTY. (308 Indians)

Susanville, 30 acres, poor rocky land, city water, poor houses.

11. MADERA COUNTY. (520 Indians)

Millerton, 140 acres, no Indians on this land.

Northford, 80 acres; water badly needed.

Mickayune, 100 acres. Some good land, poor houses; water development needed.

12. MENDOCINO COUNTY. (1154 Indians)

Hopland, 630 acres; some fairly good land, water inadequate. Additional houses badly needed. A few Indians have fairly good homes here, and there are several good vineyards.

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MARICOPA COUNTY (continued)--

Laytonville, 200 acres; some good land. Indians have only contaminated creek water to drink; very poor over-crowded homes.

Guideville, 62 acres, fairly good land; no water.

Coyotte Valley, 100 acres, some good land; no water.

Lotter Valley, 10 acres, good land, no water.

Redwood Valley, 80 acres, some fairly good land and domestic water; poor houses.

Manchester, 115 acres, some good land, no irrigation needed; very poor domestic water supply and poor housing conditions.

Sherwood, 290 acres. Some fairly good land, poor water, and extremely bad housing conditions.

Ukiah, 95 acres, some good land, inadequate water, poor houses.

13. MOHAVE COUNTY. (861 Indians)

Cedarville, 17 acres, poor land, no water, poor houses.

Alturas, 20 acres, good land, well, very poor homes.

Likely, 40 acres. Some good land and water; poor homes.

Lookout, 40 acres, same as above.

14. NEVADA COUNTY. (33 Indians)

Nevada City, 40 acres, domestic water, poor houses.

15. YAVAPAI COUNTY. (251 Indians)

Taylorville, 160 acres. No Indians residing on this land. They are too poor to build houses.

16. YAVAPAI COUNTY. (146 Indians)

Colfax, 40 acres. No Indians here.

Auburn, 20 acres, very rough and rocky; no domestic water; miserably poor homes.

17. SARAZAPARIC COUNTY. (186 Indians)

Wilton, 30 acres, good land, but no water for irrigation.

A deep well would simply ample water to irrigate gardens.

Redding. 30 acres; some good land with  
no drinking water; one family on this land.

19. SONOMA COUNTY. (545 Indians)

Alexander Valley, 54 acres; well, and five families in  
two small houses.

Cloverdale, 27 acres. No water, poor houses.

Dry Creek, 75 acres. A dark canyon. No hope here.

Stewarts Point, 40 acres. Very good homes and water,  
provided by County School Superintendent.

Sebastopol, 40 acres, poor land; no Indians on it.

Lytton, 50 acres, purchased in 1927 for \$10,000;  
no water or improvements. Land has never been  
occupied by Indians. They are too poor to build  
houses and make necessary improvements.

20. TEHAMA COUNTY. (125 Indians)

Paskenta, 260 acres, several families here in very  
poor houses; drink contaminated creek water.

21. TULARE COUNTY. (351 Indians)

Strathmore, 40 acres. No Indians on this tract,  
No improvements and no water.

22. TOULUMNE COUNTY. (163 Indians)

Toolumne, 289 acres, both domestic and irrigation  
water here; very poor houses.

Jamestown, 20 acres, only one family.

23. YOLO COUNTY (54 Indians)

Rumsey, 75 acres, poor steep mountain land. No water,  
Very rude shacks for homes.

24. YUBA COUNTY. (86 Indians)

Strawberry Valley, 1/2 (Half) acre; Only one house;  
poor condition.

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There are 88 of these small tracts of land, about 50 of which are now occupied by from one to several families, scattered through twenty-four counties. Strange to say no funds have ever been made available to assist the Indians in establishing homes on these lands. On many of them there is no water and the Indians are too poor to build decent homes or make other improvements. As a result we find them living in the most wretched and unsanitary hovels, large families, often two or three families, crowded into one or two room shacks, sleeping promiscuously together on filthy disease infected rags for bedding. The whole situation is so wretched and deplorable as to beggar description. Depending as they must on seasonal employment migratory laborers on hop, fruit and olive ranches and as occasional farm laborers, they are able in these days of low prices of farm products to earn very little--merely sufficient to keep soul and body together. Very few of them can save enough from their meagre earnings to purchase materials to build a decent house. As a result their rude shacks are mostly constructed with old scraps of lumber, tin cans, etc., salvaged from dump piles in neighboring towns. They are powerless to improve their situation without some financial aid from the Government.

It would seem that in these days when the federal Government is so generously aiding white communities to wipe out slum districts in cities, and considering the debt that we owe to these dispossessed people, that some way should be found to finance a home improvement program for these unfortunate and neglected Indians. This would seem to be a worthy project and one to which the Government is in duty bound to give just and sympathetic consideration. The Indians in this jurisdiction are willing to work and to help themselves if they can only be furnished tools and materials. If some way can be found to allot say \$150,000 from the public works or other available funds, to finance a very modest home improvement program for these Indians, much could be accomplished in the betterment of their living conditions. The Indians will do most of the work and perform all of the unskilled and semi-skilled labor, if funds can be provided to purchase materials and employ the small number of skilled mechanics who may be required in planning and supervising the construction and other improvements. No expensive program is contemplated. Many of the present homes can be remodeled, repaired and enlarged at comparatively small cost. It will be necessary to develop water in many cases and to improve the supplies already available. And some provision should be made for the purchase of household furniture, bedding, cooking utensils, etc. The funds allotted for this purpose,

if necessary, might be made on a reimbursable basis. It is expected that the California Indians will within the next few years receive an award of several million dollars as the result of their suit now pending in the U. S. Court of Claims from which any loan now made for improving their home conditions can be reimbursed. Surely some way should be devised to give relief to these long suffering and greatly wronged people, and without unnecessary delay.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that these fifty or more groups of destitute Indians, scattered through more than twenty counties in the thickly settled central portion of the State, living as they are in dirt, filth and disease, and mingling freely with the general population, are so many suppurating sores on the body social and menace to the health and decency of the communities in which they are located. Because of their ever increasing menace, if for no other reason, something should be speedily done to wipe out these slums and to transform these numerous small and scattered groups of Indian homes into clean, sanitary and respectable communities of healthy, useful and upright citizens. By according to these Indians the economic and social justice they so rightfully deserve, we shall also safeguard the health of thousands of good citizens and school children with whom the Indians living in these wretched, disease infected hovels are daily mingling. The spirit of justice if not sympathy should prompt us hastily to extend relief to a situation that is at once a reflection upon our Government and an ever growing menace to a populous section of a great commonwealth.

You and other members of your Committee visited and inspected a number of these rancherias when you held hearings in California last year. You saw how utterly hopeless it is for the Indians to improve their conditions without some aid from the Government. You heard the stories of their destitution and suffering from the Indians themselves, and I am sure your personal knowledge of the situation will enable you forcibly to present their needs and the justice of their plea for help to the proper authorities in Washington who may be in position to answer, at least in part, their cry for help.

As requested by you I am sending a copy of this letter to Senator Miran W. Johnson for his information and consideration.

Very sincerely yours,

(SIGNED) O. H. Lips,  
Superintendent.