

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews

Mike Mansfield Papers

5-13-1957

Congressional and Federal S. Con. Res. 3 S-331S. 809

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "Congressional and Federal S. Con. Res. 3 S-331S. 809" (1957). *Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews*. 224.

https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/224

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

Statement of Senator Mike Mansfield (D. Mont.)

Monday, May 13, 1957

CONGRESSIONAL AND FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY

S. Con. Res. 3 - S-331 - S-809

Mr. Chairman, I want to take a few moments this morning to express my views on Federal Indian Policy and what I consider the Congress' responsibility in providing adequate legislation which will promote the economic well-being and the education of America's first citizens - the Indians.

I am sure that all of the members of the Committee are well aware of my views on Federal Indian Policy. Recently I called for a general review of these policies and I want to restate that I believe the only way the Indians are going to get the proper assistance is through a reevaluation of the methods by which we hope to improve the status of the Indian, both economically and socially.

The United States is at present enjoying an era of prosperity, however, it is unfortunately marked by a depression in selected areas. The farmers are the most publicized of this select group suffering from the depressed incomes and poorer standards of living, but the Indians, in my State at least, while smaller in number, have never enjoyed the economic prosperity which is associated with the American way of life.

In Montana we have 7 Indian reservations and we have many,

many problems of varying degrees. The unfortunate part is that far too many of these Indian groups are living in deplorable conditions with inadequate housing, health and welfare facilities, poor education and lack of employment opportunities. The legislation that the Committee is considering today would do much to help meet the needs of our Indians.

S. Con. Res. 3, introduced by my distinguished colleagues and the Chairman of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, the senior Senator from Montana, James E. Murray, will nullify Resolution 108 - now the guide rule for Bureau of Indian Affairs policy and this Concurrent Resolution will restate what the Congress truly feels is the responsibility of the Bureau of Indian Affairs toward the Indians. This Concurrent Resolution would encourage initiative among our Indian people in promoting their own welfare. It would provide a basis upon which the Bureau of Indian Affairs could establish a program of technical guidance and financial assistance.

I am particularly interested in the concluding paragraph which states:

"Finally, it is declared to be the sense of Congress that Federal protection and services shall be ended for any tribe, band, or group only when such unit shall have adopted a plan for its organization and operation under State law, and such plan shall have been approved by the appropriate State and by the Secretary of the Interior prior to its submission to the Congress".

I have always felt that the American government has a great responsibility to the Indians. In the past he has been subjected to neglect and indifference. It is time that these people were given the advantages accorded all Americans.

Premature termination of Federal control is not the answer. The Federal Government should not reduce any of its responsibilities to any group of Indians until such time as these people enjoy the opportunities substantially equal to all citizens.

S-331 concerns state jurisdiction over criminal and civil matters on Indian reservations within several states. This is a matter of considerable concern. As you know each state has the authority to legislate for jurisdiction over the Indian country if it so desires. The Bureau of Indian Affairs says that the assumption of this jurisdiction should be done after consulting with the Indian citizens of each state. What this bill is attempting to do is to clarify this - stating that this legal jurisdiction should not be assumed without the consent of the Indians. This may seem to be a minor point but I feel that not only should the Indians be consulted but their consent should be obtained by vote if necessary.

I have previously presented my views to the Subcommittee on Senator Langer's bill, S-809 and briefly it would set-up a Point IV Program for the Indians. If the Indian is to compete with the rest of our society he is going to have to be equipped with the proper train-

ing and employment opportunities. The Indian has proven himself when he has had the opportunity, particularly where there are small industries located on or near the reservations. There is a small Indian industries program now under way and the program envisioned in this bill would provide the increased opportunities necessary.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for the opportunity of appearing in behalf of these bills and in conclusion I only want to repeat that if these Indians are given the proper kinds of assistance I am sure that in time they will prove themselves.