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Gerald Wilkens
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Dear Gerry:

Thank you for your telephone call this morning. It served as a reminder that I had made some promises to send you some copies of my work.

As you have no doubt surmised, NCAI's annual convention in Greenbay became a forum for many Indians with divided loyalties to hammer and slash at NCAI's international politics. The combination of outside influences (AIO, National Indian Lutheran Board, Nicaragua, the United States, etc.) frankly frightened many of the Indian leadership to believe that "indigenous internationalism" is either "unAmerican" or Procommunist. And, even more damaging, many convention participants seemed to come away thinking that "international relations" is too complex and "just unrelated to the more pressing concerns of Indian people and their governments". After the elections, Joe DeLaCruz was left by himself to defend NCAI's policies. Since 1973, this was the first convention where a polarity of opinion regarding NCAI's international initiatives has surfaced. While no formal changes were made, there is now a clear effort coming from sources on the left and the right to challenge and undermine NCAI's initiatives in international relations.

As you know, I am the principle architect of NCAI's recent international policies. These policies are aimed at building international support for Indian rights and Indian self-determination -- long advanced by NCAI. I have, as a consequence, become a primary target of left and right political pressures on NCAI leadership. Si Whitman has apparently considered this pressure to be threatening and has, therefore, quietly relieved me of my duties as NCAI's consulor for the International Relations Portfolio. I am continuing to maintain by international contacts, and, for the short term, I am focusing on my writing. While I may be able to continue my work with NCAI in the future, I am, never-the-less, looking for a situation where there is courage and serious interest in the advancement of Indian rights at the international level. I firmly believe that if Indian tribes inside the United States are serious about their rights and the fulfillment of self-determination, they must secure political leverage within the international arena.

As George Manuel's Special Assistant in the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, I worked with indigenous people throughout the world. I found those groups increasingly successful as they built international political pressures on various states to support indigenous rights.

I am convinced that NCAI's Greenbay convention experience demonstrates the considerable power international indigenous political activism produces. The fact that both the United States and Nicaragua consider NCAI's "neither left nor right advocacy of Indian Rights" international policy a threat to their interests strongly suggests the considerable untapped political power indigenous nations possess.

For your information, in the event you haven't yet seen it, I am enclosing a copy of the NCAI "Indian Crisis in Central America" policy which has stirred such passion in the United States and in Nicaragua.

I am also enclosing a copy of a piece I wrote in 1982, which I suggest with a little editing might be suitable for your newspaper. I wrote this piece for Joe DeLaCruz and about a dozen other Indian leaders at a time when Indian leadership were retreating from growing Reagan Administration pressures. I thought the piece would cause various leaders to pull their "heads out of the sand" and begin to aggressively work for Indian rights and true Indian self-determination. DeLaCruz later used my paper as the basis for his speech at the NCAI Convention in Bismark. Many thought my piece was correct and useful, but others of more faint heart thought it was "too radical". I naturally consider the piece to be clear and to the point -- a piece which does not attempt to avoid the political realities. It calls upon Indian people to be honest and work to produce real results; instead of playing the "cake and eat it too" games with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I hope you find the enclosed materials interesting. I also hope you will take my resume in the event a situation opens up in the field of indigenous international relations.

Regards,

RUDOLPH C. RYSER