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"TERMINATION THE COLVILLE SITUATION"

by Mel Tonasket

I was asked to define termination. This is the easiest part of this speech, TERMINATION simply means the END. I could cover over that with many many words and make it sound different but it still means THE END. The history of termination started about the time the first white man first stepped on OUR land and has never ceased. In the old days it was done with guns, cannons and soldiers but the first time I really came aware of the sophisticated attack was when my parents talked over HOUSE CONCURRANT RESOLUTION 108 that was passed in 1953. In that it declared Congress's intention to terminate Federal supervision of Indians AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE TIME. Since that time tribes all over the United States have been fighting a war on paper to keep their land and culture and heritage and IDENTITY.

There have been many tribes who have lost their reservations and right to be called Indians but the spotlight has shown, mostly, on the Menominee's in Wisconsin and the Klamaths in Oregon. BOTH of these tribes were BLACKMAILED into terminating. BOTH of these tribes were waiting to get paid large Judgements against the U.S. Government but before Congress would hand over the money they both had to agree to TERMINATE before they could receive their money, and they did. These two tribes were aggressive and had good natural resources. The year before termination on the Menominee the tribe had budgeted the sum of \$520,714 for the reservation. Of this \$285,000 was invested in construction projects, \$56,745 for education, \$47,021 for welfare and \$130,000 for health and \$42,615 were set aside for law and order activities. The federal Government on a matching basis only spent \$95,000 for roads and \$49,000 for education which amounted to \$50.85 on the part of the government per each Menominee Indian. So you can see that the Government had little to gain, financially, by terminating the Menominee's. Maybe it was for their land, some people say, but MYSELF

I would never try to guess or reason the ways of the white man. GREED is the answer, I can see no other.

FIVE YEARS after termination the Federal Government had spent some \$5 million in aid to the Menominees and the State of Wisconsin and additional \$1 million. Yet this past year many homes were sold for taxes in Menominee County which previous to termination was tax exempt.

On the Klamath, they received over \$40,000 apiece and many many of these Indians were flat broke within a year or two. Some made out though and never squandered their money, the BANKS and INVESTMENT agencies got their money and this is happening TODAY. The remaining Klamaths that formed a cooperation to hold a portion of land together are having a fight RIGHT NOW with the BANK that was assigned to PROTECT them. This Bank charges the CO-OP \$100,000 per year just to handle their money, not a percentage but \$100,000 no matter what. TODAY even most of these Indians are ready to give up.

I don't want this to happen to our people or any other tribe but it will if we were to be terminated.

On the Colville, termination came to us through blackmail also. The Government took away almost half of our reservation which we call the NORTH HALF for which some of the tribe was paid \$500. In 1955 the County Commissioners got together and made another deal with the Indians; if the Tribe would pay \$40,000 a year to the counties in lieu of taxes we could have the North Half back with ONE provision, that we submit a termination bill within 5 years. This was done. Since then four or five termination bills have been introduced to Congress. The Senate has passed them several times but the House of Representatives have refused to release them from committee.

The latest attempt is HR 15673 which we call the COMPROMISE BILL. This Bill if passed would allow those who wished to sell out to do so and those who want to remain under Federal supervision could remain and the land would be sold accordingly. But after taking a closer look at the NEW BILL, by actual measurement, 5/6ths of the old bill remains and 1/6th is new. There are many things wrong and many questions unanswerable in this Bill; for example it states that the minors and incompetents will be protected. HOW? Like the Klamaths? Nobody in the BIA or in Washington D.C. has been able to answer this.

It gives the Secretary of Interior full authority to divide up the reservation as he sees fit to pay off the Indians selling out. Would he leave us remaining Indians the forest, the farm land or the water? Or will he checker board it? I hate to think about it.

It is assumed that the land will be tax free through the 10 years of limbo, from the date of enactment until when the money is paid. But ASSUMED is a bad word to Indians when treaties in BLACK AND WHITE aren't being upheld today. If these lands were not kept in a tax free status, just imagine how many peoples land and property would be lost through taxation after ten years! I could go on and on about but I will just give one more to show how fair the Bill is: The Bill states that three appraisals will be made and then the average of the three will be made known to the tribe but NOWHERE DOES IT GUARANTEE that this is the amount to be paid. IF it was paid, here is how it would work. To make it simple, we'll say one appraisal is for \$10.00, the second appraisal is for \$20.00 and the other is for \$30.00. According to the bill we wouldn't even get the high appraisal, but would have to take the average which would be twenty. From this settlement the (3) appraisers are to be paid and the attorneys get 10% of the gross and the Indians get the left overs. I don't know who wrote up this Bill but I guess they think that this is FAIR enough for INDIANS.

If termination did come to our reservation my people would lose the privilege of being tax exempt on trust land; they would lose the educational opportunities through the BIA and the Tribal grants and scholarships; they would lose medical assistance; they would lose things that cannot be paid for with money, e.g. culture, heritage, identity and also something very dear to an Indian's heart, hunting and fishing rights.

I try not to look back at the history of termination, nor even think about it but I HAVE to look forward and help in planning for development of our resources. Not only the resources of the land, but the resources of our children and our elders. With a reservation of 1.3 million acres and uranium on one side of the reservation, silver on the other side and gold on the other, (no core drilling has been done to find out what's underneath OUR land), with three sides of our reservation boundried by rivers, Coulee Dam and Chief Joseph Dams on our southern border, there HAS to be opportunities for development. All of this would be lost to the tribe and you could just bet that some big company or corporation would make BIG money out of it. Why not us?

To summarize my personal feelings about termination I would like to say:

The word "Termination" takes on many meanings to different people when it is used in regard to Indian Affairs. The Senators and Congressmen who promote termination use the word to mean the ending of Federal supervision over the property of Indian tribes. They equate "termination" with "liberation". In some instances they create the illusion through Congressional bills of providing the members of these tribes with full citizenship through termination policy, even though Indians already legally possess all rights of citizenship. Many well-meaning non-Indian people cheer these congressional friends of Indians to "liberate" the Indians from their reservation homelands.

If more people were to read the record, they would find that termination means dispossession of Indians from their land. Indian people have already been effectively "liberated" from most of the United States.

Indian people, largely without tribal ties, took over Alcatraz, another group of Indians moved into Ft. Lawton, near Seattle, to reclaim that for Indian people. To these urban-Indians, the issue of tribal homelands is SECONDARY to the importance of now picking up on their own culture - a proud Indian heritage that was nearly lost in the bustling foreign environment outside the tribe.

It seems unbelievable that any Indian would choose to trade a Tribe for corporate identity subject to State recognition for continued existence. Yet some members of the Colville Tribe are proposing to do just that!

There are some urban-Indians who would promote the termination of the federal-Indian relationship. Perhaps urban-Indians should really look deeply into the implications of termination and, when they see what it's really about, they'd be appalled at the grossness of the theft of Indian land in congressional termination proposals.

As far as I'm concerned, when a person trades his heritage, the unborn Indians' future, his sovereign nation for money, it's called TREASON.