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**Anti-Indian Movement on  
the Tribal Frontier**

by

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The following is the introductory chapter for **Occasional Paper #16, The Anti-Indian Movement on the Tribal Frontier, Special Revised Edition** by Rudolph C. Ryser. The full report may be purchased from CWIS for \$12.00 (\$US) plus \$2.00 shipping and handling for the first two items and \$0.50 for each additional item thereafter. Please see our [Occasional Paper Order Form](#) for more information.

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*Prologue*

Ideal economic and political conditions in the middle 1970s helped create an anti-Indian backlash in the form of the Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities. Non-Indian property owners on several Indian reservations considered themselves victims of a thoughtless government

bureaucracy. By 1973, the economy was badly shaken by oil price increases that put people in long lines waiting for a fillup. In 1974, a federal court issued a landmark decision saying Indian tribes owned half the salmon and steelhead fishery. The non-Indian property owners joined forces with the off-reservation fishers and the Anti-Indian Movement began to bloom.

At first, only Indian tribes were aware of what some tribal leaders called the "white backlash." A few popular news magazines reported the "dissatisfaction of whites" with Indian tribes. The general public knew little of the brewing controversy. By 1978, tribal leaders declared the "white backlash" defeated. They turned their attention to the pressing economic, political, and cultural needs of their peoples.

By the 1980's, the Anti-Indian Movement once again commanded tribal leader's attention. In the state of Washington some of the same activists and property owners active in the 1970s were seeking popular support for a public initiative that threatened the rights of Indians directly. The Movement grew and expanded into several states linked together in a growing network of small groups of property owners, small farmers, small businesses, and a growing presence of right-wing provocateurs.

The development of the Anti-Indian Movement over a generation took place in rural areas in increasingly close connection with urban based organizers. Each stage of development increased political sophistication even though popular numbers in support of the organizations remained stable. Right-wing groups and individuals joined the Movement in search of a constituency. With its roots in property owner groups on Indian reservations, the Anti-Indian Movement became a sophisticated movement aimed at the dismemberment of Indian reservations. A logical consequence of the Movement's origins was its eventual participation in the "Wise Use Movement" as a charter member. Sponsored by the Unification Church of Reverend Moon located in Virginia, the Wise Use Movement has become the new coalition of right-wing groups and the authoritarian right combined with conservation groups, survivalists, and some land and resource hungry corporations.

In the following pages, we give a detailed account of the development of the Anti-Indian Movement, its ideology, its allies in government, business and extremist political groups.

## Author's Notes

This study would not have been possible without the voluntary help of hundreds of informants across the United States, and a few journalists willing to report incidents, and share their information. With too many names to mention here, we express our deepest gratitude to them all. Of course, none of the work in this study would have been possible without the loving support of my wife, **Nancy**, who through many discussions helped me clarify connections between details of the project. I wish to express a special thanks to **Carol Minugh** for her encouragement and help during most of the term of RWAIN and to **Joe Tallakson** who consistently helped fill in some blanks. I extend special thanks to the **Northwest Indian Fish Commission** for its continuing interest in this project. For their encouragement and endorsements I also thank the **Puget Sound Task Force on Human Rights** in Seattle, Washington and the support and substantive contributions by the **Center for Democratic Renewal** in Atlanta, Georgia.

While I am wholly responsible for the content and interpretations in the analysis to follow, I must acknowledge the help given by several students from Evergreen State College who gave their time to fill in hundreds of "document report instruments" that contributed to the RWAIN database. And of course, this work could not have been done without the persistence and willingness to receive small pay by two research assistants, **Tina L. Benshoof** and **Molly Gray**. Thank you both for your excellent work.

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**Owing to the subject of this study** and the ease with which the analysis may be misunderstood, I offer the following notes of clarification as to the use of some terms. In various parts of the study, I use the terms conservative, right-wing (sometimes modified with the word extreme or extremist) and Far Right. Like many descriptive political terms, these are at best inexact. They are terms used in a

wide range of political literature and their meaning is often in flux. By the use of the term **conservative**, I intend to apply its normative meaning: *Of or pertaining to a political philosophy stressing tradition and social stability, minimal interference of governmental institutions in private economic activities, but a strong influence of governmental or religious institutions in the control of individual morality and social behavior.* In the case of **right-wing**, I intend perhaps a non-normative meaning: *The more intellectually rigid, uncompromising and sometimes intolerant division of conservative political thought expressed in political parties or as movements opposed to socialism and communism, dogmatically committed to narrow interpretations of American political history, proponent of or at least sympathetic with ideas of social Darwinism and intent on radically altering social, economic, and political institutions to reflect these views achieved through forced change or political change.* Finally, I mean by **Far Right**: *The avowedly violent white supremacist movement as well as the subtler forms of bigotry practiced by so-called Christian Patriots and Christian Identity who may or may not use violence to achieve their goals.*

Publication of what we have found will hopefully contribute to a new measure of understanding between Indians and non-Indians. Perhaps too, our findings will help prevent a recurrence of past Indian/non-Indian conflicts. With the knowledge of what is hidden, perhaps a peaceful conclusion to the present conflicts can be found in a way that increases our collective respect for one another and our commitment to democratic resolution of conflicts.

## Overview

The large-scale movement of non-Indians onto Indian reservations began with the U.S. government's 19th century General Allotment Act (1887). The U.S. government intended to destroy tribal governments and break up Indian reservations under, what was then considered, the progressive **Manifest Destiny Doctrine** - the historical inevitability of Anglo-Saxon domination of North America from sea to sea. By moving non-Indians onto Indian reservations as the new reservation land-owners and locating individual Indians on parcels of reservation land or off the reservation completely, the United States government hoped to eliminate Indian nations once and for

all. Under the **Indian Reorganization Act** of 1934, the U.S. Congress only partially repudiated the Allotment law for its destructive impact on tribal peoples.

In the late 1960's, it had become clear that the U.S. government's 19th century policy succeeded in creating a "checker-board land ownership" pattern on every "allotted reservation." Not only did the land ownership pattern put non-Indian and Indian landowners living next to each other, but it also complicated an increasingly difficult jurisdictional mess for tribal, federal, and state governments. Though Indian nations originally reserved full jurisdictional authority to their own governments inside reservation boundaries, the United States government began to undermine that jurisdiction by imposing federal or state laws on reservations where non-Indians owned property. This complicated and confused civil and criminal law and justice responsibilities on Indian reservations.

By the 1980's more than 500,000 non-Indians claimed land on Indian reservations. More than half of many tribes' populations were forced to live outside reservations. They no longer had the ability to fully enjoy the benefits of territories reserved to them as distinct peoples under treaties and agreements with the United States of America. Non-Indian landowners competed with tribal peoples for limited resources and land inside reservation boundaries.

The majority of the displaced Indians now live in areas and communities near their reservation, while still many thousands of Indians were forced under a 1950's U.S. policy of relocation to move to major cities like Los Angeles, Denver, Seattle, Chicago, New York, and Baltimore.

The non-Indian land owners included people seeking inexpensive summer retreats, retirement homes, and commercial businesses. At first they received help and encouragement from the United States government. Now they are also receiving help, encouragement and money from right-wing elements too. Influence ranging from Sun Myun Moon's Unification Church to followers of neo-Nazi groups and white supremacists dovetailed with a movement that began as a legitimate political dispute.

Under the guise of "mainstream non-profit research and education organizations" and the deceptively attractive "equal rights for everyone" slogan, the Anti-Indian Movement emerged in the last third of this century. With its right-wing extremist technical help, the Movement seeks and receives support and money from unsuspecting "reservation Non-Indians" and off-reservation non-Indians.

With their own agenda, the Anti-Indian Movement's reactionaries and extremists employ tactics and slogans calculated to exploit Indian and non-Indian fears of each other. Using the non-Indians' fear of Indians to build a power base in mainstream politics, right-wing extremists took advantage of fear and bigotry.

While many transplanted non-Indians now live as residents on Indian reservations, large numbers are absentee landowners - they don't live on the reservation. Despite their absentee landowner status, the "reservation non-Indian" in the late 1960's became a new and powerful challenge to the peace and stability of Indian nations. Indian people had often heard the refrain "Why don't you go back to your reservation?" when Indian and non-Indian conflicts arose outside the reservation. It was a wrenching experience to have conflicts inside the reservation and hear that "Indians should become a part of greater society and have equal rights with everyone."

Larger numbers of non-Indian landowners rejected tribal governmental authority inside the reservation, and they called upon the state to exercise its powers there. Non-Indian rejection of "alien tribal governments" built pressures leading to legal confrontations between tribal and state governments over a widening range of jurisdictional subjects. Increasing numbers of "reservation non-Indians" supplied state governments with the wedge needed to expand state powers into Indian reservations - *de facto annexation of tribal lands*. Tribes and states intensified their mutual antagonism and suspicion.

Since the General Allotment act in 1887, limitations on reservation resources forced more and more Indians to fish and hunt for their food in ceded areas near reservations. Indians asserted that treaties with the United States guaranteed continuing tribal access to some off-reservation resources. Not until tribes and states began to battle over

control of natural resources outside reservation boundaries did there arise an organized Anti-Indian Movement in the 20th century. "Reservation non-Indians" became the core organizers of what became a highly structured Anti-Indian Movement. By 1991, the activists responsible for starting the Movement in 1976 headed four key organizations in the states of Washington, Montana, and Wisconsin.

**The United Property Owners of Washington (UPOW)** and **Protect Americans' Rights and Resources (PARR)** in Wisconsin are the main "constituent organizations."

In the present study, we examined the origins, development, goals and future directions of the Anti-Indian Movement. Over the twenty-three years following 1968, we found that the U.S. based anti-Indian movement grew from a half dozen non-Indian property owner groups in two states, to more than fifty organizations in 1991. The first organized anti-Indian network formed in 1976 under the umbrella of the **Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities (ICERR)**. The ICERR linked on-reservation non-Indian landowner opposition to tribal governments with off-reservation non-Indian sport and commercial fishermen opposed to tribal treaty protected fishing rights. The mixture of on-reservation and off-reservation conflicts produced a sometimes confused, often distorted, attack on tribal governments, the federal government - especially the judiciary - and often bitter attacks on individual Indian people. ICERR formed the Anti-Indian movement's populist and frequently racist ideology that attracted legitimately distressed non-Indians as well as bigoted activists.

During the ten years after emerging, the movement shifted from incipient forms of racism and populism to a more virulent form of reactionary-racism with subtle contours and technical refinements. Right-wing extremists began in 1983 to assume a strong influence in the Anti-Indian Movement through the Washington State bases **Steelhead and Salmon Protection Action in Washington Now (S/SPAWN)** organization.

In the years that followed, right wing and militantly bigoted activists gravitated to the Wisconsin-based **Protect Americans' Rights and Resources (PARR)**. Still later, right-wing personalities assumed positions within the

**Citizen's Equal Rights Alliance (CERA) and United Property Owners of Washington (UPOW) organizations.**

The Movement evolved into its present structure from two property owners' associations and a single umbrella organization (ICERR) in 1976. Today the Movement boasts two "national organizations", five "coordinating local organizations" and a consistent network of twenty-three "local organizations" or "local contacts" and a claimed constituency of 450,000 people. Though the Movement frequently targets the Quinault Indian Nation, Suquamish Tribe, and Lummi Indian Nation (in the state of Washington), Blackfoot, Salish & Kootenai, and the Crow in Montana receive strong emphasis too. Politically active Indian tribes in Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin have felt the affects of the network.

In fifteen years the organizational and tactical focus of the Movement moved from the state of Washington to Wisconsin and then back to Washington again. Despite maintaining contacts in several states, the Movement actually conducted major activities in only three tactical states.

Though the organizational focus shifted from one state to another, the ideological influence, tactics, and strategy flowed from Washington State based personalities and organizations. The history of the movement illustrated an important and revealing constant which helps understand the Anti-Indian Movement: Consistent key organizers, and consistent organizational base. Three groups (Quinault Property Owners Association (QPOA - Quinault Reservation), Association of Property Owners, and Residents in Port Madison Area (APORPMA - Suquamish Reservation), and the Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities (ICERR) are politically linked to each of the Movement's organizational efforts. While the organizational strategy of the Anti-Indian Movement was to create a new organization for each political or legal challenge to Indian rights, all of the organizations have essentially the same supporting organizations. In other words, though the number of "national or coordinating organizations" increased in number, the number of



organizers and activists remained virtually the same - all had the same members.

Four individuals have been involved in the organization of every coordinating or national organization in the Anti-Indian Movement since 1968: **George Garland** (QPOA), **Pierce** and **May Davis** (APORPMA) and **Betty Morris** (ICERR and QPOA). All come from the state of Washington. Garland and Morris are mainly concerned with the Quinault Indian Reservation. The Davises are mainly concerned with the Suquamish Indian Reservation. After 1983, these main anti-Indian activists were joined by more sophisticated organizers from the right-wing elements of American politics. State Senator Jack Metcalf, fundraiser Alan Gotlieb, political organizer Barbara Lindsay, lawyer David L. Yamashita, and National Wildlife Federation activists Carol and Tom Lewis (all from Washington) joined the Movement.

After organizing the Movement for twenty-three years, its leaders can claim several successes:

- **Adoption by a slim majority in the state of Washington Initiative 456 intended to create the public impression that Washington's voters opposed Indian rights and the continuation of Indian treaties - 1984.**
- **U.S. Supreme Court decided a County government could exercise zoning powers inside a reservation where non-Indians make up a substantial portion of the reservation population - 1989.**
- **The total number of consistent anti-Indian activists country-wide is between 80 and 90 persons in sixteen states by 1991.**
- **The number of persons participating in anti-Indian activities (including meetings, protests, conferences, and letter-writing is an estimated 10,850 persons country-wide by 1991.**
- **The number of persons who contribute funds or letters of support to anti-Indian groups is an estimated 34,150 by 1991.**
- **A total of 50 local anti-Indian organizations or contacts, five coordinating organizations, and two national organizations have been created by the Movement mainly in the states of**

**Washington, Montana, Minnesota, and Wisconsin (not including organizations with other agendas which closely identify with the Movement) by 1991.**

Though the Anti-Indian Movement is held together with a lot of smoke and mirrors there is enough substance to it to seriously threaten the peace and stability of Indian tribes in the United States.

The Anti-Indian Movement has its roots deep in America's psyche. The bigotry of right-wing and Far Right political extremes is also deeply rooted in America's politics - especially in connection with Indians. The implied or explicit belief in "white superiority" and "native backwardness and inferiority" permeates American history. In the 1880's, U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes, Supreme Court Justice Waite and Civil War icon General John Sherman advocated the *Doctrine of Manifest Destiny*. Senator Dawes of Massachusetts was both an adherent to the Manifest Destiny doctrine and the main sponsor of the *General Allotment Act of 1887*. It was quite normal in the U.S. Congress to espouse what now would be considered "white supremacist" ideas. In 1899 Senator Albert T. Beveridge rose before the U.S. Senate and announced:

**God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns... He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savages and senile peoples.**

Theodore Roosevelt, John Cabot Lodge, and John Hay, each in turn, endorsed with a strong sense of certainty the view that the Anglo-Saxon was destined to rule the world. Such views expressed in the 19th century and in the early 20th century continue to ring true in the minds of many non-Indian property owners. The superiority of the "white race" is the foundation on which the Anti-Indian Movement organizers and right-wing helpers rest their efforts to dismember Indian tribes.

The RWAIN Project reveals victims on all sides of a developing controversy. Only a small number of people can be said to intentionally provoke conflicts and violence between Indians and non-Indians. Due to these Conflicts, victims of Indian and non-Indian conflicts fear one another - the cycle of fear feeds on itself. The small number of people who either gain politically or economically from Indian and non-Indian conflict use bigotry to promote division and fear. Both contribute to the destabilization of tribal communities and undermine tribal values.

When democratic values are crippled, freedom and liberty become the next victims. Authoritarianism, and terrorized societies replace free societies. The Anti-Indian Movement threatens to produce just such results in Indian Country. It also threatens to intensify rather than relieve conflicts born from historical mistakes, which can be resolved peacefully through mutual government to government negotiations.

## **Findings:**

What are some of the mistakes? From the point of view of many Indian leaders and many non-Ideological participants in the Anti-Indian Movement there is agreement on what are some of the mistakes that should be remedied. Our findings in this study are:

- The forced division of tribally reserved territories under the 1887 General Allotment Act and the failure of the U.S. government to repudiate this disgraceful act.
- The United States government violated treaty and other agreements when it unilaterally manipulated the sale of tribally reserved lands to non-Indians without the consent of tribal governments. This mistake was subsequently compounded when states governments and the United States governments unlawfully expanded their civil and criminal jurisdiction (following non-Indian reservation residents) into Indian reservations without the consent of tribal governments. Finally, the mistake causes injury to both tribal members and non-Indian land-owners when Indians were displaced, and impoverished; and non-Indians were not advised that as a practical matter they had consented to

place themselves under the jurisdiction of an Indian Nation's government.

- State governments have mistaken Indian nations as a threat to their sovereignty. States governments and their subordinate governments agrees as a price for statehood that they would not attempt to extend their powers into Indian Country. To do so in fact undercuts the state's legitimacy, thus weakening the state, and encourages citizens to sabotage the rule of law.
- As a result of distraction or a mistaken belief in "historical inevitability", the United States and the various states failed to recognize that relations with Indian tribes have always been political in character. And to insure the healthy cooperation between Indian tribes and the United States, relations must be dynamically adjusted over time through treaties and agreements and not through neglect or brute force. The basic premise of mutual respect and sovereign equality between the United States and Indian nations must be repeatedly incorporated in each agreement.
- The failure of governments (tribal, state and federal) to insist on the free and open negotiation of disputes, (always taking into consideration the affect intergovernmental agreements have on tribal members or non-Indians) has contributed to a feeling of "being wronged" among many non-ideological citizens in the United States. These persons may suffer economic or social hardships as a result of these failures. As a result, persons who may live on or near Indian reservations, have become prime candidates for incitement to harassment or violence against Indian people by militant bigots and Far Right activists who seek to provoke conflicts as a way of advancing their ideas of "white supremacy".

## **Remedies:**

Some remedies for these findings are readily apparent:

- To resolve the problem of non-Indians who do not wish to live under the authority of tribal governments, the problem must be recognized as having been created by the U.S. government - thus

placing the burden of resolution on that government. Non-Indians ought to be given a choice whether they wish to now live under tribal authority. If they do not object, then nothing more need be done except remove (by negotiation) any extensions of state, county or U.S. authority inside the boundaries of a reservation that conflict with tribal authority. If a non-Indian rejects tribal authority, the United States government becomes obligated to purchase non-Indian property and improvements at a fair market value, and provide assistance in relocation.

- With those non-Indian persons continuing to remain on the reservation, the tribal government ought to assist them by inviting them to send representatives to an advisory council which can provide continuing advice to tribal authorities. Such a council would serve as a sounding-board for non-Indian views on tribal actions which may affect their interests.
- To reduce conflicts between tribal and state (plus subsidiary) governments, tribal and state governments ought to negotiate a government to government accord which defines a framework for dispute resolution. County and municipal governments should be defined within this framework.
- Prior to the negotiation of joint natural resource management regimes between tribal and state governments (in ceded areas), every effort ought to be made to ensure careful consideration of "user group" interests. The State is obligated to consider these interests among those persons who are not members or the Negotiating tribe. These negotiations can be substantially improved by including elected state and tribal officials on the negotiation teams - officials who take seriously the responsibility for ensuring consideration of "user group" interests.
- Where tribal, state, and U.S. federal conflicts occur, a tripartite inter-governmental negotiating framework ought to be formed - taking into consideration remedies suggested above.
- Tribal governments should institute hate-crime laws permitting the prosecution of those who commit malicious harassment, intimidation, or violence

aimed at tribal property, resources, or aimed at individual tribal members by racial extremists. The Tribal government ought to sponsor and support the formation and continued operation of a "Human Rights Commission" which included tribal and non-tribal membership. The Commission ought to document incidents of bigoted harassment, intimidation, property damage, and violence aimed at tribal members and non-tribal members within the territorial jurisdiction of the Tribe. The Commission should be responsible for conducting public meetings to ensure public awareness of human rights norms. The Commission ought to have the capacity to provide assistance to victims of hate-crime, or refer victims to an appropriate tribal agency.