

# Tribal Populations in Transition: Sioux Reservations and Federal Policy, 1934-1965

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*Rosebud Indian Agency, 1949*

*Tribal Populations in Transition* 363

The third quarter of South Dakota's first century of statehood was a difficult transition era for the state's tribal population. As poverty stalked Sioux communities, federal programs were inaugurated that emphasized dissimilar economic schemes to alleviate distress, ranging from reservation resource development to the re-locating of unemployed tribesmen. Contrary to federal plans, the situation on Sioux reservations did not improve from 1934 to 1965, but, instead, living conditions and economic opportunities declined. Departing from its procedures in previous policy decisions, however, the federal government did not act alone during this time period. Tribal leaders participated in policy discussions, presenting ideas to Congress that were, in part, incorporated into the era's evolving reservation programs. Generally, Sioux leaders opposed any increase in federal authority, but, at the same time, they also opposed any termination or reduction in federal assistance or the removal of tribal land from trust status. Reconciliation between these two paradoxical positions was difficult and constantly tested tribal leaders and their leadership skills.



By the mid-twentieth century, few concerns were as important to both policy makers and tribal leaders as the fortune and future of reservation economies. South Dakota Sioux leaders recognized that improved reservation economic conditions were tied to improved living standards, which, in turn, were essential to eliminating the tribesmen's federal dependency. Since Sioux living standards were higher in the first three decades of the twentieth century (1900-1930) than in the following three decades (1930-1960), any program from 1930 to 1960 encountered difficulties. Many reservation residents described the earlier years as good because individual families were able to build small cattle herds from early government-issue stock. For example, ten thousand cattle on Pine Ridge reservation in 1885 had increased to forty thousand by 1912. In 1917, Red Shirt Table residents on Pine Ridge stocked their own range land and derived their livelihood from cattle. World War I increased beef prices, and federal authorities encouraged Sioux cattlemen to sell their animals to capitalize on high wartime prices.<sup>1</sup> Increasing wheat prices accompanied higher beef prices. As a result, Red Shirt Table landowners leased their now empty range to white farmers who paid them a one-year lease at a price equal to "one-half the value of the land" during the last years of the war, enabling the tribesmen to maintain an income from their lands without working them.<sup>2</sup>

As a whole, South Dakota agriculture prospered during and briefly after the war, then declined. During these years, 1915 through 1920, a pattern of agricultural underdevelopment was established that eventually impoverished the Sioux. While reservation residents participated in the local farm economy as suppliers and laborers, they largely became agrarian capitalists dependent upon outside farm operators to lease or purchase their lands. Many operators eventually defaulted on both their leases and land purchases when the state's agricultural economy dropped following the war, thus depriving many Sioux of any revenue. In addition, improved agricultural mechanization decreased manual

1. Ruth Hill Useem, "The Aftermath of Defeat: A Study of Acculturation among the Rosebud Sioux of South Dakota" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1947), p. 156; Gordon Macgregor, *Warriors without Weapons: A Study of the Society and Personality Development of the Pine Ridge Sioux* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), pp. 38-40. Useem noted that individuals who were one-half or more Sioux believed they lived better at the turn of the century under the "Old Deal" than in the years after 1930 under the New Deal.

2. William O. Roberts, "Successful Agriculture within the Reservation Framework," *Applied Anthropology* 2 (Apr.-June 1943): 38.



labor requirements on local farms and reduced this important tribal employment source.<sup>3</sup>

The Sioux dependence on lease rents and land sales (both sources of unearned income) for subsistence in the 1920s was often greater than their dependence on wages (earned income). Yankton Sioux reservation per-capita individual income in 1926 was \$149, of which \$72 was unearned and \$77 was earned income. The reserve's small land base and proximity to white communities enabled the tribesmen to find some wage work. In contrast, the more isolated western Sioux reservation populations depended more on land-lease and land-sale income. The Standing Rock reserve, for example, possessed more acreage available for either lease or sale in 1926, resulting in a per-capita income of \$167, of which \$112 was unearned income and only \$55 was earned income. These statistics also reflected the lower number of wage opportunities available to Standing Rock residents.<sup>4</sup>

This reliance upon unearned income in the 1920s constituted an economic pattern that was ill-suited for long-term stable growth, and it contributed to reservation underdevelopment. To offset this negative economic trend on the nation's reservations, the Office of Indian Affairs inaugurated a "Five Year Program" to stimulate the economy on the Blackfeet reservation in 1921. This program stressed intense farming and ranch development for five years and was soon introduced on several Sioux reservations. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles Burke (a South Dakotan) supported the Indian Service's Five Year Program, which was directed toward improving individual families' economic rehabilitation. The cash loans provided to develop family resources supplemented individual income during the mid-to-late 1920s, when reservation unearned and earned incomes dropped.<sup>5</sup>

The end of the Five Year Program coincided with an increasing number of farm operators who defaulted on tribal land leases and sales. In addition, Sioux citizens who possessed fee-patented land began to default on their real-estate taxes and mortgages and, as

3. Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 2d ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), pp. 351-52; Macgregor, *Warriors without Weapons*, pp. 38-41.

4. Lewis Meriam et al., *The Problem of Indian Administration*, Institute for Government Research, Studies in Administration (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1928), pp. 451-56.

5. Roberts, "Successful Agriculture," p. 38; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 2:887.

366 *South Dakota History*

they lost their homes, moved to relatives' homes. As a result, Sioux income levels and earning potential on the reservation declined after 1926. This loss of income and resources forced many Sioux to rely for their survival on relief, which included direct help from the Indian Service and county assistance, when possible, for the Sioux citizen. The Pine Ridge residents were eating their horses during the winter of 1926-1927, illustrating their destitute condition.<sup>6</sup>

While the state's reservations were economically distressed in the 1920s, the tribesmen's poverty intensified following Wall Street's 1929 crash. Unlike the majority of the South Dakota population, reservation residents did not participate in the economic recovery that followed the 1930s depression. Historically underdeveloped, the Sioux reserves participated only marginally in the region's agricultural economy when times were good.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to 1929, only 530 individual Sioux living on the Lower Brule, Crow Creek, Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Standing Rock, and Yank-

6. Meriam, *Problem of Indian Administration*, p. 447.

7. Roberts, "Successful Agriculture," pp. 38-39.

*The cycle of poverty that began with the loss of Sioux land and income in the 1920s intensified during the 1930s. Most residents of South Dakota's Indian reservations were left untouched by the economic recovery that followed the Great Depression.*



ton reservations (which had a combined population of about thirteen thousand) received direct relief. By 1933, 1,953 individual Sioux received aid on those same five reservations, and that increase reflected the growing reservation poverty. After the 1929 stock market crash, the American Red Cross provided direct aid to Pine Ridge Sioux. Also hit hard was the Yankton reservation, where the annual per-capita income dropped to \$1.28 by 1933, representing a 98-percent plunge since 1926. All Sioux reservation incomes dropped from 1926 to 1933, except for Pine Ridge, where annual income rose from \$50.00 to \$79.94. Increased direct-relief (and in-kind) payments accounted for this slight rise. In general, the Sioux were more dependent upon direct relief for their survival by 1933 than they were after World War I.<sup>8</sup>

Against this background of expanding reservation poverty, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed John Collier in 1933 to the office of commissioner of Indian affairs. The commissioner soon put forth a New Deal for the American Indian, stressing that tribal self-rule would create economically self-sufficient communities and end reservation dependency upon federal sources or outside lessees. Before that could happen, Collier believed that tribes had to reorganize their existing political and economic systems and create tribal corporations to manage tribal assets.<sup>9</sup>

Collier authored the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 to implement his program. Congress added extensive amendments and revisions, but Collier continued to support the IRA because it contained the core of his original ideas for reform. The final IRA legislation repealed the allotment laws and contained provisions for land consolidation, but it was unlike any previous federal program in that tribes voted either to participate or not participate in the self-governing aspects of the law. If tribal members voted to participate, they then either approved or rejected a new constitution. After the constitution was accepted, one-third of the tribe's members could petition for a charter of tribal incorpora-

8. South Dakota, State Planning Board and Works Progress Administration, *Indians of South Dakota*, 1937, pp. 45-46; Meriam, *Problem of Indian Administration*, p. 452.

9. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Indian Affairs, *To Grant to Indians Living under Federal Tutelage the Freedom to Organize for Purposes of Local Self-Government and Economic Enterprise: Hearing before the Committee on Indian Affairs on S. 2755*, 73d Cong., 2d sess., 1934, pt. 1, pp. 16-21. For a concise analysis of Collier's program, see "Tribal Self-Government and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934," *Michigan Law Review* 70 (Apr. 1972): 955-86. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 comprised the core of Collier's tribal rehabilitation program.



tion, which the tribe had either to accept or reject by majority vote. The charter illustrated Collier's emphasis upon tribal economic development and, once ratified, allowed a tribe to manage its own resources.<sup>10</sup>

South Dakota reservation populations acknowledged the importance of improving reservation conditions, but tribal support was divided for Collier's agenda. During Senate hearings on the proposed legislation, Rosebud reservation delegate Sam La Point defended Collier's concept of land consolidation and tribal management of reservation resources. La Point claimed that the commissioner's government reorganization scheme would increase tribal self-rule, returning initiative to the Sioux, something that had been missing. Though La Point was from Rosebud, his observations applied to all the state's reservations as he noted that in the existing system, "We have become a people dependent on somebody else to do something for us all the time."<sup>11</sup>

Following congressional passage of the Indian Reorganization Act, Indian Service officials urged Sioux residents on each reservation to accept the new legislation. Next, the Office of Indian Affairs encouraged tribal endorsement of the new constitutions and pushed for tribal sanction of economic charters. Sioux IRA opponents charged Office of Indian Affairs personnel—who assumed a high profile during reservation elections—of pressuring tribal work-relief participants to campaign for the IRA by threatening them with loss of their jobs. Reservation dissidents claimed that Office of Indian Affairs officials promised almost unlimited funds to tribes accepting the IRA and accused both agency and tribal supporters of discriminating against IRA opponents in loan and credit schemes.<sup>12</sup> Despite Office of Indian Affairs persuasion and destitute tribal populations who had need of the promised loans, reservation Sioux did not overwhelmingly support the Indian Reorganization Act.

While a major objective of the IRA was reservation economic revitalization, only five of the state's nine reservations adopted the law, making them eligible for its loan provisions. The low per-

10. Graham D. Taylor, *The New Deal and American Indian Tribalism: The Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), pp. 20-29.

11. *To Grant to Indians Living under Federal Tutelage the Freedom to Organize*, pt. 2, p. 225.

12. U.S., Congress, Senate, *Repeal of the So-Called Wheeler-Howard Act*, S. Rept. 1047, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 1939, Serial 10295, pp. 1-3.

centage of IRA constitution adoption and an even lower acceptance of charters illustrated the tribesmen's initial distrust of the New Deal program and their increasing disapproval of Collier's program once implemented. Crow Creek, Yankton, Sisseton, and Standing Rock residents rejected the IRA; Cheyenne River, Lower Brule, Flandreau, Pine Ridge, and Rosebud accepted the IRA and adopted new constitutions. Of these five, only Rosebud, Flandreau, and Lower Brule approved tribal economic charters.<sup>13</sup>

Political factions within the tribe that had specific focuses, such as treaty and claims organizations, now opposed Collier's New Deal, suspecting that the new tribal governments might threaten the rights and influence of the older, pre-IRA groups. The voluntary, inter-reservation Black Hills Treaty Council was the most important claims organization. Loosely organized for decades, the council worked to settle the Sioux Indians' long-standing Black Hills claim against the United States. Being a descendant of a signatory band present at the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 was the only requirement for membership. The (Pine Ridge) Wounded Knee survivors association was another claims group composed of survivors of the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre who sought compensation for loss of life and property. The Yankton reservation business and claims committee also functioned as the reservation government, handling both tribal business and Yankton Pipestone quarry claims.

The members of these tribal claims organizations were philosophically conservative, but they were well versed in the principles of sovereignty. Past Sioux and United States treaty relations gave the claims groups both their strength and their security. Members argued that treaties established tribal relations with the United States and that these treaties defined federal obligations to the Sioux and stressed Sioux rights. Treaty and claims groups denounced the IRA, foreseeing their own loss of power within the community. Under the New Deal program, if adopted, the new political governments had the potential to assume the exclusive tribal claim function by usurping the right to employ counsel.<sup>14</sup> Since unsettled Sioux claims existed against the United States and

13. U.S., Congress, House, *Report with Respect to the House Resolution Authorizing the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs to Conduct an Investigation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs*, H. Rept. 2503, 82d Cong., 2d sess., 1952, Serial 11582, p. 51.

14. Section 16 of the act provided for tribal employment of counsel. See "Tribal Self-Government," p. 965.



were central to these groups' existence, members decried the New Deal on the grounds that the IRA would deny the Sioux "rights which are guaranteed to us by previous treaties." In addition, claims members prudently and conservatively argued that old business should be settled before moving on to something new. Many asked, "Why should not these things be settled, to give us what is already due us before asking us to engage in a new organization?"<sup>15</sup>

The tribal factions, the ongoing depression, and the harsh drought severely tested Collier's New Deal program in Sioux country. While the IRA was directed toward greater tribal self-rule and the rebuilding of reservation economies, when neither occurred, even the Sioux who supported the IRA often joined the claims and treaty groups, increasing tribal opposition to the Indian New Deal. As Collier's promises of greater self-rule and increased property evaporated, claims groups argued that greater economic potential existed in obtaining compensation from the United States for past wrongs than in supporting the IRA. There appeared to be truth to their claim. The Sioux Nation's Black Hills case was pending in the United States Court of Claims, and several bills had been introduced in Congress to compensate 1890 Wounded Knee survivors.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the Black Hills Treaty Council, with sixteen hundred members residing on the western reservations, became more vocal. Eugene Little of Rosebud revealed the sentiments of the organization, remarking that the reservation residents would "be fed and clothed and be prosperous" if Sioux governments operated according to treaty stipulations.<sup>17</sup>

Collier himself was partially responsible for Sioux opposition to the New Deal. Promises he made to tribal leaders concerning reservation self-rule and economic development remained unfulfilled. For example, IRA constitutions preserved the Department of the

15. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Indian Affairs, *Conditions on Sioux Reservations: Hearings before the Committee on Indian Affairs on H. R. 5753*, 75th Cong., 1st sess., 1937, p. 7.

16. The Black Hills claim, *Sioux Tribe of Indians v. United States*, had been filed in the United States Court of Claims on 7 May 1923, and claim organizers were waiting for a favorable decision. The court examined United States offsetting claims, and when final decision came in 1944, the court ruled against the Sioux. The progress of bills to compensate Wounded Knee survivors can be followed in U.S., Congress, House, *Sioux Indians, Wounded Knee Massacre: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs on H. R. 2535*, 75th Cong., 3d sess., 1938. A similar piece of legislation was introduced before the 74th Congress (H. R. 11778), but neither bill became law.

17. *Conditions on Sioux Reservations*, p. 11.

Interior's role in tribal affairs, continuing the tribal wardship status. Collier acknowledged this problem in 1940, claiming that "Congress was pretty conservative and did not go nearly as far in the self-government direction," and, as a result, the IRA "did not go nearly as far as the bill [he had proposed] in this way." On the other hand, Collier defended secretarial approval clauses in the IRA constitutions because federal supervision would prevent the tribes from making "a grave mistake."<sup>18</sup>

Those tribesmen who opposed the IRA claimed that tribal acceptance of the act simply changed the Indian from an involuntary ward to a voluntary ward because tribally approved IRA constitutions authorized the secretary of the interior to review and approve tribal-council-approved ordinances relating to specific topics.<sup>19</sup> Secretarial review maintained wardship, contrary to Commissioner Collier's promise of self-rule, making this broken pledge to the Sioux even more bitter. Since the commissioner had been the leading crusader against the Office of Indian Affairs and its paternalistic regulations in the 1920s, Sioux leaders now criticized him remorselessly for preserving the autocratic office. Cheyenne River resident J. E. High Hawk expressed the Sioux opponents' sentiment when he said: "Mr. Collier used to advocate for the Indians and kick the Indian Bureau also, but when he was given a job and placed there as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, why he never tried to do anything for the Indians."<sup>20</sup> The Sioux had taken Collier's first statements at face value, and as a consequence, they personally blamed Collier for failing to fulfill his promises.

Sioux disillusionment with Collier also heightened their scrutiny of the reservation operations of the Office of Indian Affairs. Many tribesmen accused Indian affairs personnel on the reservation of doing nothing to reduce Sioux suffering. Sioux people expressed their frustration with the field office for assigning two "Indian

18. U.S., Congress, House, *Wheeler-Howard Act—Exempt Certain Indians: Hearings before the Committee on Indian Affairs, on S. 2103*, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 1940, pp. 65-66. While Commissioner Collier philosophically supported tribal self-rule, practical considerations ultimately governed his final decisions. For example, in the end scarce tribal resources would continue to be governed by federal administrators to minimize any chance for error. Government control, though, ultimately contributed to continuing underdevelopment, both social and economical, of the reservations.

19. *Repeal of the So-Called Wheeler-Howard Act*, p. 3.

20. U.S., Congress, House, *Investigate Indian Affairs: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs, Pursuant to H. Res. 166*, 78th Cong., 2d sess., 1944, pt. 3, p. 153.



days" a week. Under this system, agency personnel set aside two days each week for tribal members to walk into the agency and transact business, and they reserved the other work days to conduct federal duties but would receive tribesmen by appointment. The Sioux interpreted this restrictive work schedule as both discriminatory and detrimental to their ability to conduct business. It forced tribal people to wait long periods in the outer office for meetings, providing them ample time to observe agency personnel quickly receiving white visitors. The tribesmen also complained that Office of Indian Affairs employees often failed to pay landowners their lease money immediately but were quick to lease tribal lands and to collect rent moneys. Since many Sioux could handle their own lease money, some tribal leaders argued that no justification existed to keep the Office of Indian Affairs on the reservation. Trips to county and state office buildings and courts, which kept much more liberal hours, led Sisseton resident Sampson Renville to declare, "Naturally we feel, therefore, that the county officials and employees are more sympathetic towards us than our own agency itself."<sup>21</sup> As this quotation suggests, by the 1940s, some South Dakota Sioux believed that local government was more receptive to tribal welfare and social needs, and that perception gave impetus to the tribesmen's support for diminishing the reservation responsibilities of the Office of Indian Affairs when questions pertaining to termination began to emerge.

New Deal tribal program officer D'Arcy McNickle claimed that economic development was the main purpose of the IRA, but that too failed in Sioux country. Sisseton resident Simon J. Kirk proclaimed that Sioux living standards were modest in 1910 but declined after the Indian New Deal. He, like many, wanted to return to 1910 standards of reservation living, fearing that the future would bring greater despair.<sup>22</sup> Collier acknowledged the existence of the Sioux reservation's deep economic problems, confessing, "The situation of the Sioux Tribes is a desperate situation." Fractionalized heirship lands and lack of credit demonstrated the failure of past federal programs to develop reservation resources as secure employment bases for tribal populations. Collier even conceded that the "Indian Reorganization Act may have come too late in the case of the Sioux."<sup>23</sup>

21. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

22. Taylor, *New Deal and American Indian Tribalism*, p. 176n.3; *Investigate Indian Affairs*, pt. 3, p. 85.

23. *Wheeler-Howard Act—Exempt Certain Indians*, p. 53.



*Tribal Populations in Transition* 373



*Disillusioned with the Indian New Deal, some Sioux criticized the policies and day-to-day operations of the Office of Indian Affairs. Shown above is the agency office at Pine Ridge in 1956.*

Given the historical underdevelopment of Sioux reservations, the downward spiral of economic activity hit the tribes particularly hard. The state's reservation residents had participated in South Dakota's 1920s farm economy primarily as land leasers, land sellers, and seasonal workers. In the 1930s, economic depression and drought crippled the state's farming industry and destroyed the seasonal job market as well as the demand for land, causing the Sioux even greater economic distress than their non-Indian neighbors. South Dakota Representative Francis Case articulated the results of this chain reaction in 1938, noting that eighty-five percent of the state's farmers were on relief and the same conditions "made it doubly difficult for the Indian."<sup>24</sup>

24. *Conditions on Sioux Reservations*, p. 6.

374 *South Dakota History*

Sioux tribesmen hoped the Indian Reorganization Act's economic component would improve reservation conditions, but continual funding delays and declining reservation conditions turned hope into disillusionment. Sioux on Pine Ridge had, for several years, eaten their horses to survive, and subsequently, by 1937, they had horses neither to eat for survival nor to carry firewood for winter fuel. Instead, the people carried firewood on their backs, and the heavy winter snows of 1936-1937, accompanied by a killing flu, caused many reservation deaths. The Sioux, unlike their white neighbors, did not blame former President Herbert Hoover for their plight in the 1930s, but instead blamed President Roosevelt's administration. Spotted Owl from Pine Ridge and a member of the Black Hills Treaty Council claimed: "We were getting along first rate until the Democrats got in and then we do not get along so good. Ever since the Democrats were in power, the Indians did not die from sickness so much as from hunger." Rosebud resident Walter Bull Man specifically blamed the IRA itself, claiming that the act "has had the effect of making me eat my own horses" and that the solution rested in "shooting" the corporate charters and IRA.<sup>25</sup>

Change also accompanied the hardship associated with the drought and depression. New Deal work relief projects employed reservation residents, and for many Sioux, it was the first time they had ever worked for wages. Officially, the Indian Emergency Conservation Work (IECW), also commonly known as the Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division (CCC-ID), provided work programs to reservation residents. Together, all the federal relief projects raised Rosebud reservation's annual per-capita income to \$150.50 by 1939, and 95 percent of the Rosebud Sioux population received some form of federal relief during 1939 and 1940. Pine Ridge's yearly per-capita income reached \$120.00 in 1942, revealing the tribesmen's growing dependency on, and the importance of wage income to, reservation workers. In that year, Pine Ridge per-capita incomes were divided between 60 percent earned income and 40 percent unearned income, figures that were representative for other reservations.<sup>26</sup> Anthropologist Gordon Macgregor observed in 1946, "Labor then must be regarded as one

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7, 10-12; quotations on pp. 10, 17.

26. John Useem, Gordon Macgregor, and Ruth Hill Useem, "Wartime Employment and Cultural Adjustments of the Rosebud Sioux," *Applied Anthropology* 2 (Jan.-Mar. 1943): 1-2; Roger Bromert, "The Sioux and the Indian-CCC," *South Dakota History* 8 (Fall 1978): 340n; Macgregor, *Warriors without Weapons*, p. 49.

of the great resources of the reservation." He warned that terminating any reservation work program would reverse the small gains of the past because these wage-dependent people were "living in a strictly rural area, where opportunities for industrial and agricultural wage work are normally very limited or irregular, [and therefore] a satisfactory permanent economic adjustment based on wage work becomes problematical."<sup>27</sup>

Macgregor made his bleak assessment after World War II had interrupted the New Deal reservation resource planning and development. Coinciding with the loss of New Deal programs, South Dakota farming and ranching also changed. During the war years, the state's farms became larger with fewer operators. A changing local farm economy prohibited a large number of tribesmen from ever becoming independent operators competing for a share of the local agricultural economy. Technology changed farming and ranching practices forever, requiring fewer people to use more land. The expense of the new technology made it economically impossible for reservation residents to begin farm or ranch operations. As a result, the average white operation in western South Dakota in 1940 was 40 percent larger than that of a nearby Indian farm and was worth twice as much. The trend toward fewer, but larger, farming operations simply prohibited the Sioux from using their small, fractionalized lands to develop larger competitive and efficient farming or ranching operations. Average farm income also revealed the economic gap between the state's tribal and non-tribal populations. In 1940, the Pine Ridge mean family income was about \$458, while the average gross value of products produced on neighboring white farms ranged from \$837 to \$1,063, and tribal farm sizes were one-half as large as white operations.<sup>28</sup>

Stimulating industrial production, America's entrance into World War II ended the nation's economic depression as businesses hired large numbers of wage laborers. This type of wartime prosperity did not come to South Dakota's reservations, where the economic depression continued throughout the 1940s. Reservation distress remained hidden from public view as the nation focused all its resources on the war effort. Only the returning wet cycle brought some help, enabling reservation residents to plant subsistence gardens and find seasonal agricultural work in local potato and

27. Macgregor, *Warriors without Weapons*, p. 50.

28. Useem, Macgregor, and Useem, "Wartime Employment," pp. 1-2; Macgregor, *Warriors without Weapons*, pp. 49-50.



376     *South Dakota History*



*New Deal work relief projects such as the Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division (CCC-ID) brought badly needed income to the reservations. This photograph shows the CCC-ID camp at Rosebud.*



*In addition to providing wage employment for reservation residents, the CCC-ID provided opportunities for learning new job skills. Here, tribal members participate in a fire prevention class on the Standing Rock reservation.*

*Tribal Populations in Transition* 377



*These workers are sawing wood for use in constructing tents in a CCC-ID camp. Workers lived with their families in the camps during the construction of roads and dams or other projects.*



*The CCC-ID enrollees shown in this photograph are working on a road project at Rosebud. Reservation work programs aided tribal members who were becoming more wage-dependent in an economy that offered limited opportunities for wage work.*



sugar beet fields, but most tribal families still continued to receive some form of relief.<sup>29</sup>

Congress abolished the Civilian Conservation Corps in the summer of 1942, ending the government's most extensive New Deal reservation work program. The loss of this direct work relief program and several indirect relief programs forced the tribesmen to find alternative aid. Military service provided many reservation Sioux with assistance because servicemen often participated in the dependency grant program, in which money from an individual's service pay was sent to the man's family. Particularly during World War II, the armed services provided indirect relief to the reservation communities, replacing defunct New Deal work relief programs.<sup>30</sup>

World War II industrial employment opportunities continued to elude reservation populations. In the spring of 1942, 75 percent of the employable Rosebud work force wanted off-reservation work; only 20 percent of these found employment, while the other 80 percent did not find positions simply because they did not have the financial ability to travel to distant military-industrial jobs. The small number who left reservations often found employment nearby, for example, at the Black Hills Ordnance Depot in Igloo, South Dakota. Most off-reservation relocatees found gang work as unskilled laborers, but a small number of Sioux obtained positions as skilled painters, carpenters, plumbers, mechanics, and heavy equipment operators.<sup>31</sup>

Since only a small percentage of the state's tribal population obtained off-reservation war employment, most remained on the reservation (except those in the military) and continued to receive either direct or indirect reservation relief. The federal government also changed reservation ration issues during the war when the Office of Indian Affairs ceased direct reservation rations to most of South Dakota's Sioux population and provided relief through purchase orders issued to local merchants. In addition, congressional passage of the Social Security Act of 1935 and the creation of the Social Security Administration changed other aspects of reservation relief programs. The Social Security Administration assumed control of specific welfare and social programs as early as

29. Useem, Macgregor, and Useem, "Wartime Employment," pp. 1-3.

30. U.S., Congress, House, *Present Relations of the Federal Government to the American Indian*, House Committee Print no. 38, 85th Cong., 2d sess., 1958, p. 127.

31. Useem, Macgregor, and Useem, "Wartime Employment," pp. 3-4.



1941 on Cheyenne River reservation and shortly thereafter on the remaining Sioux reservations. By war's end, the agency administered direct aid to the state's reservations through state assistance programs, including old-age assistance, aid to dependent children, and aid to needy blind.<sup>32</sup>

At about this time, several Sioux tribal governments also initiated small reservation relief programs. The Lower Brule relief committee obtained funds from the tribal cattle enterprise to aid destitute tribesmen who were unable to obtain assistance from other sources. The demise of the tribal cattle enterprise in the early 1950s ended the program.<sup>33</sup> The importance of the tribal assistance committees and the new Social Security programs cannot be underestimated. These new welfare programs not only supported tribal members but also created tribal dependency on state and federal agencies that were outside the Office of Indian Affairs. For example, Clarence Gray Eagle from Standing Rock received eighteen dollars a month in 1944 to live, as did many reservation elderly, even though he did "not know where it comes from." He added, "that is all I have to live on."<sup>34</sup> Gray Eagle's subsistence level represented the usual, not the unusual, wartime Sioux reservation standard of living.

Shifting part of the reservation assistance programs from the Office of Indian Affairs to the state programs redirected Sioux dependency toward the state of South Dakota. This trend continued after the war, and, as a result, state leaders demanded a greater role in tribal affairs in order to force rules compliance, especially when tribal appropriations from the state increased. By 1955, South Dakota was expending \$135,279 a month on tribal welfare.<sup>35</sup> This rapidly increasing figure sparked controversy between state reservation populations and state authorities. Tribal lands were tax exempt and beyond state control; yet, tribesmen were eligible for state services supported by state tax revenues. This early welfare issue was a prelude to future state-tribal jurisdiction conflicts in South Dakota.

During World War II, the tribesmen adjusted to state assistance programs, reflecting, in part, their wish to reduce the Office of Indian Affairs reservation presence in order to increase tribal gov-

32. Macgregor, *Warriors without Weapons*, p. 51n.10; *Present Relations of the Federal Government to the American Indian*, p. 125.

33. *Present Relations of the Federal Government to the American Indian*, p. 127.

34. *Investigate Indian Affairs*, pt. 3, p. 139.

35. *Present Relations of the Federal Government to the American Indian*, p. 80.

380 *South Dakota History*

ernance on the reservations. Sioux leaders understood that greater self-rule was possible only with corresponding reduction in federal control. Despite tribal criticism that the IRA did not provide greater self-rule, an enduring legacy of the Collier era had been his encouragement of tribal participation in federal policy decisions. Congressional hearings provided the vehicle for tribal input, enabling tribesmen to participate in policy decisions. The United States Senate investigations initiated in 1928 at John Collier's instigation represent a significant example of tribal input. The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs concluded their investigation in 1943 after fifteen years of hearings. Senators heard reservation leaders across the nation reiterate common concerns: (1) settle past tribal claims against the United States; (2) improve reservation health, welfare, and employment opportunities; (3) reduce the reservation responsibilities of the Office of Indian Affairs.<sup>36</sup>

In 1944, the House Committee on Indian Affairs initiated further study of the nation's reservations, and before the hearings commenced, committee members sent a questionnaire to reservations asking tribal leaders to list reservation problems, to declare the need to vote again on the IRA, to update tribal claims against the United States, and to articulate the tribe's opinion of the Indian Service and what activities could be eliminated, among other things.<sup>37</sup> Sioux responses to the House committee questions were predictable. Collectively, poor housing, inadequate land base, inferior schools, high unemployment, absence of credit, and racial prejudice plagued the state's reservations. Despite their criticisms of the IRA, some of the IRA reservations favored retaining the law in order to give the governments and the tribal courts time to succeed. Standing Rock reservation requested the abolishment of the reservation court to save tribal funds. More importantly, the Sioux wanted to curtail Indian Service programs through staff reductions. Pine Ridge leaders specifically requested the elimination of the Office of Indian Affairs "arts and crafts, anthropology, organizers, regional offices, social service, road department, forestry, and grazing."<sup>38</sup>

36. S. Lyman Tyler, *A History of Indian Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), pp. 139-40.

37. *Investigate Indian Affairs*, pt. 3, pp. 4-5; Tyler, *History of Indian Affairs*, pp. 141-42.

38. *Investigate Indian Affairs*, pt. 3, pp. 38, 85-87, 121, 148, 171-72, 175-78, 199-201, 221-22; quotation on p. 222.

Yankton Sioux Claims Committee secretary Clarence E. Forman articulated Sioux sentiments toward the Indian Service when he told the investigating committee: "Keep Indian Service employees out of our life's pathway and we will go forward. Take down the bars obstructing our social advancement." On the other hand, Forman, like other Sioux, demanded that the government maintain trust restrictions on allotments. He added, "Give to us and our Indian soldiers who are sacrificing their all on the battlefields what our Americans and allies are fighting for, freedom and equal justice to all."<sup>39</sup> The state's tribal populations seemed to believe that reduction of Indian Service programs would enable more dollars to reach reservation residents while at the same time decreasing government paternalism. The tribesmen's advocacy of the continued tax exemption of trust lands from local assessments illustrated their desire to perpetuate the reservation's political autonomy from the state and thereby prohibit South Dakota from encroaching on the reservations as federal authority decreased.

During House committee hearings, tribal leaders from reservations close to urban areas, such as Sisseton, Flandreau, and Yankton, ranked the improvement of educational conditions to increase the tribesmen's wage work opportunities as their first priority. Their reliance upon land reserves was nearly impossible since their lands were highly fractionalized, making it difficult either to farm or lease remaining lands efficiently. On the other hand, while the larger, isolated western reservation populations supported better education, their top concern was the obtaining of credit to build reservation stock operations, utilize local land resources, and create tribal self-sufficiency programs.

After hearing tribal testimony, the committee recommended extending IRA loan provisions to non-IRA tribes, thus eliminating discriminatory Indian Service credit regulations. In addition, the committee advocated settling tribal land claims, consolidating fractionalized heirship lands, and teaching the Indian to live outside the reservation boundaries. The House committee concluded, "The improvement of Indian homes and the development of a stable and secure economic base for the Indian family is fundamental to the final solution of the Indian problem and ranks second only to education."<sup>40</sup> Both Sioux leaders and members of the

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 199-201.

40. *Ibid.*, pt. 4, p. 342.





*After the institution of the Indian Reorganization Act, tribes sought greater autonomy in a variety of areas, including education. In this 1941 photograph, a delegation from the Rosebud Indian Reservation meets with officials of the Education Division of the Office of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C.*

House committee agreed on the fundamental reservation problems and the tentative direction for future solutions.

Despite economic hardships and poor living conditions, Sioux leaders stressed the importance of greater tribal autonomy and informed members of the House that the reservations' future depended upon either modifying or eliminating federal supervision over tribal affairs. Lower Brule resident Harvey Big Eagle gave voice to this Sioux attitude toward the Office of Indian Affairs when he stated that the "Indian Bureau . . . does not do anything that spells salvation for the Indians," especially, he added, when 69 percent of the agency's budget "goes for the salaries of the Indian Service people and 31 percent goes for conferences, cars, gas."<sup>41</sup> Standing Rock resident Guy W. Jones voiced an even stronger statement: "I have no finances to back me but I am just as well off as any white man. So I urge you to abolish the Indian Bureau."

41. Ibid., pt. 3, p. 167.

Many criticized the Indian Service for spending \$32 million when Sioux poverty and distress were so high. Joseph Eagle, also from Standing Rock, added that the Sioux received nothing from that appropriation, and therefore, "we want to abrogate the Indian Bureau, . . . but we also want our land."<sup>42</sup> The Sioux favored partial termination of federal control, but they wanted to maintain the trust status of their lands since many Sioux could not pay the property taxes and still make a living. Tax exemption also preserved their political sovereignty and provided them with the freedom to make responsible decisions that affected their scarce resources. Sioux leaders clearly wanted the Indian Service's responsibilities either reduced or eliminated; based on tribal testimony nationwide, Congress acted but moved beyond tribal wishes.

Members of the House Committee evaluated these tribal comments and concluded that "the Indian witnesses appearing before our committee were on the whole, well informed, reasonable, practical, and persistent."<sup>43</sup> After hearing the tribes' request for "partial" termination of the Office of Indian Affairs, Congress began reducing the Indian Service's responsibilities, thereby inaugurating the termination era. Reducing the Indian Service's role was essential if tribes were to gain greater control over their own affairs, but termination of federal paternalism also increased their risks of failure. Recent scholarship has not evaluated tribal input into Congress's termination decisions but, instead, has generally blamed an irresponsible Congress for permitting "Indian affairs [to slip] into obscurity during the war, [as] Congress began recklessly entertaining a rash of minor bills and major legislation to terminate Indian services."<sup>44</sup>

This interpretation reduces the tribes to the passive role of receiving policy when, in fact, they were active participants in congressional policy decisions, just like other constituents. The difference between Congress's termination legislation and the Sioux desire for elimination of federal paternalism was one of degree. In the early 1950s, Congress went further toward removing wardship status than Sioux leaders and other Indian tribes wished and recommended eliminating the trust status of land, ending tribal government, and abrogating treaty rights. At that juncture, the

42. Ibid., pp. 139, 140.

43. Ibid., pt. 4, p. 347.

44. Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), p. 21.

Sioux opposed termination, but at the same time that situation created an unresolvable dilemma affecting tribal self-rule. Greater autonomy was possible only with a corresponding reduction of federal paternalism, which the Sioux ultimately protected. Risks accompanied any change, and the Sioux tribesmen's conservative posture enabled them to blame Congress and rely on "the Indian Bureau as a combination foster-father, Santa Claus, and scape-goat."<sup>45</sup> Fearing termination, Sioux leaders scrutinized congressional legislation to determine if that was the legislation's objective even though they clamored for greater self-rule. Their fear of termination was offset only by their fear of increased federal control over reservation affairs, and that irreconcilable dilemma would restrict both tribal and congressional decisions in the future.<sup>46</sup>

The possibility of Congress terminating any South Dakota reservation was remote. In 1947, the Bureau of Indian Affairs ranked tribes according to their abilities to manage their own affairs. Of all South Dakota reservation populations, only the Cheyenne River Sioux were judged to possess the resources and skills necessary to manage their own affairs within the next ten years. The remaining Sioux reservations in South Dakota, according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, would not be capable of managing their own affairs for an indefinite time.<sup>47</sup>

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Aberdeen Area Office, reevaluated the state's reservations in 1954 and reported that the residents of the Sisseton and Yankton reservations were ready for federal withdrawal in five years because of the populations' high education level and the tribesmen's inability to use fractionalized heirship lands. Their futures, the office concluded, lay in off-reservation employment.<sup>48</sup> Yet, in 1953, the Sisseton Sioux themselves did not want the Bureau of Indian Affairs removed from the reservation; a standard reply was "our people are not ready for it."<sup>49</sup> Writing in 1949, anthropologist John Embree compared this tribal reluctance to end the dependent paternalistic relation with the

45. U.S., Congress, House, *Report with Respect to the House Resolution Authorizing the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs to Conduct an Investigation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs*, H. Rept. 2680, 83d Cong., 2d sess., 1954, Serial 11747, p. 78 (hereafter cited H. Rept. 2680).

46. Mamie L. Mizen, *Federal Facilities for Indians: Tribal Relations with the Federal Government* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967), pp. ix-x.

47. Tyler, *History of Indian Affairs*, pp. 163-64.

48. H. Rept. 2680, p. 23.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 406.



federal government to the Japanese-American experience during World War II at War Relocation Authority camps. Despite a dislike of their wardens, the internees feared release, for "wardship insured security—freedom might be dangerous."<sup>50</sup>

In an ironic twist to this dilemma, Congress indirectly compelled tribes to forget their hesitancy and to assume greater sovereignty when the lawmakers reduced federal tribal appropriations after World War II, forcing tribes to replace lost monies with tribally generated revenues. The reduction of federal funds in 1947 decreased Pine Ridge reservation services, especially in the area of law and order. Revenue reductions forced the Pine Ridge tribal council to enact a lease tax (Res. No. 34-49) in 1949 to create tribal taxes to fund necessary services. Individuals leasing farming and grazing land were required to pay a yearly tax of three cents per acre for grazing land and fifteen cents per acre for farming land. Nontribal lessees challenged the tribe's action in court, but their suit failed because the court held that the Pine Ridge tribe possessed all the inherent attributes of sovereignty "excepting where restrictions have been placed" by Congress.<sup>51</sup> Despite the Pine Ridge lease tax, which was important in defining the boundaries of tribal sovereignty, the tribe still depended, for the most part, on outside land users to support reservation services. Reservation economic development continued to languish behind the local economy.

After World War II, reservation economic improvement emerged as an essential but elusive component of any contemplated federal withdrawal. From 1934 to 1950, Congress emphasized first reservation resource development and then worker relocation, but neither concept worked successfully. Reservation unemployment increased after the war when returning veterans and workers forced the state's reservations into deeper poverty. By 1956, approximately 60 percent of Pine Ridge reservation residents were landless, had no opportunities to obtain credit, and were thus eliminated from using reservation resources. In addition, the tribe was equally poor, having a net worth of \$121 per person. Increased state relief to tribal populations and wage work were now crucial

50. John Embree, "The Indian Bureau and Self-Government," *Human Organization* 8 (Spring 1949): 12.

51. *Iron Crow v. Ogallala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota*, 129 F. Supp. 15; *Iron Crow v. Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota*, 231 F. 2d 89; *Barta v. Oglala Sioux Tribe of Pine Ridge Reservation of South Dakota*, 259 F. 2d 553.

386 *South Dakota History*



to reservations without other resources. In 1955, 42 percent of all Standing Rock income came from wages, 23 percent of the reservation income derived from welfare payments, 22 percent of the individual income was lease money, and 13 percent came from individual agricultural operations. Sisseton Tribal Chairman Melvin Robertson described his reservation's postwar cycle of dependency as one in which most of the reservation's population received public assistance for seven months a year and found seasonal work for the remaining five months.<sup>52</sup>

The escalating poverty after World War II illustrated the hopelessness of reallocating reservation resources among reservation

52. U.S., Congress, Senate, *Area Redevelopment: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Labor of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare on S. 2663*, 84th Cong., 2d sess., 1956, pt. 2, pp. 892-95, 938-39; Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, pp. 8-9; U.S., Congress, House, *Sioux Indian Tribes, North and South Dakota: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Pursuant to H. Res. 30*, 84th Cong., 1st sess., 1955, p. 78; H. Rept. 2680, p. 109; U.S., Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Cultural and Economic Status of the Sioux People, 1955, Standing Rock Reservation, North and South Dakota*, Missouri River Basin Investigations Project, Report no. 151, Billings, Mont., 1957, p. 44.



*Sioux living conditions did not improve in the years after World War II. Not uncommon in the 1950s were homesites such as this one at Pine Ridge.*

residents. Sioux veterans, without military dependency grants, returned to reservations, adding to the reservation's postwar poverty. The Bureau of Indian Affairs created a relocation program to counter this economic dilemma in 1949, and Congress accelerated the program in 1953. Moving rural reservation Sioux to urban jobs offered a short-term solution to a deep-seated problem since reservation resources would never provide adequate local employment opportunities for growing tribal populations. The Sioux partially supported relocation because urban centers offered employment opportunities that were absent on the reservations. Twelve families from a group of 107 families at Bullhead on the Standing Rock reservation wanted to relocate. Despite their willingness, few Sioux left the reservations, and those who did often returned, further aggravating reservation unemployment. In 1956, 10 percent of the Pine Ridge work force of two to three thousand individuals found full-time employment on the reservation. Roughly 50 percent, or about fifteen hundred workers, found seasonal farm labor in Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming.<sup>53</sup>

53. *Sioux Indian Tribes, North and South Dakota*, pp. 7-9; *Area Redevelopment*, pt. 2, pp. 900-902.



The Bureau of Indian Affairs relocation program eventually sent Sioux to several out-of-state cities, especially Chicago, Dallas, and Oakland. Rapid City received most of the in-state relocatees. Most men who went to Rapid City in the late 1940s and early 1950s possessed construction skills that provided them with seasonal employment. These workers also brought their dependents to Rapid City, forcing city officials to confront problems associated with seasonal unemployment and housing shortages. The local Catholic church attempted to respond to the need through the Mother Butler Center in north Rapid City, aiding the new refugees from the state's reservations to find adequate housing, training, and year-round jobs. The needs of this in-state Sioux migration put a greater financial stress on both local and state welfare programs. Numerous off-reservation critics voiced their complaints, claiming that tribal people paid minimum state taxes, and the situation heightened hostility between Sioux and non-Sioux citizens of South Dakota. By and large, Sioux relocation was a calamitous reallocation of both reservation resources and problems. The tribesman's urban employment was generally sporadic, and local agencies did not possess resources to deal with the growing urban populations. In addition, the social transition was often difficult. Veterans, who had spent time off the reservation, adjusted most easily, but their spouses, who had never left the reservation, often quickly returned to their rural homes. When relocation was achieved, it frequently extended problems, including underdevelopment, from the reservation to the cities.<sup>54</sup>

An alternative was to bring industry to the reservation. By 1955, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Glenn Emmons pushed reservation industrial development as a substitute to relocation. Congress also supported this concept but preferred to tie economic development nationwide into one rehabilitation package. In that way, Congress classified and included reservations as a region of rural poverty like any other depressed rural area, sidestepping individual reservation redevelopment bills. A national industrial and rural-area redevelopment bill passed Congress in 1954, but President Dwight D. Eisenhower vetoed the legislation. Illinois Senator Paul Douglas had added grant amendments that were contrary to Eisenhower's conservative monetary views, even though the president had verbally supported the redevelopment concept.<sup>55</sup>

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47, 118. For more on social adjustment problems of relocation, see Fixico, *Termination and Relocation*, pp. 190-92.

55. U.S., Congress, Senate, *Area Redevelopment Act: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Banking and Currency on S. 268, S. 722, and S. 1064*,

South Dakota Sioux also supported area redevelopment because the concept offered the hope of decreasing tribal relocation, with its associated problems, and increasing both reservation wage opportunities and tribal authority. Pine Ridge leader William Fire Thunder supported area redevelopment since only a small number of educated reservation residents had successfully relocated. He also observed that "cattle raising and farming cannot support us and we know that relocation will not solve our problem for a long time," but area redevelopment would create "new employment opportunities on and near our reservation [and] will help us solve our problem. That is why we have been in full favor of the program of the commissioner to try to attract industry to reservations."<sup>56</sup>

Since industrial cooperation was also in the state's best interests, nontribal groups worked with several reservation leaders on economic rehabilitation, and local communities provided tribes with limited assistance. Sisseton tribal chairman Melvin Robertson cooperated with the Sisseton Chamber of Commerce in 1956, encouraging business to relocate to that reservation, but without success.<sup>57</sup> Sisseton was an area of intense long-term poverty, making it difficult to entice any industry to relocate on the reservation. The Sioux understood the negative effects of reservation conditions on industry's willingness to develop reservation ventures. Pine Ridge leader Henry Black Elk, Jr., summarized their predicament, "Our basic problem is poverty."<sup>58</sup>

Reservation poverty escalated throughout the 1950s while Congress and the president struggled to develop a national program. Finally, the general economic rehabilitation legislation became law in 1961, coinciding with the beginning of the nation's emerging War on Poverty. An area redevelopment act provided government loans to private industry for either plant relocation to depressed areas or improvement of plants already located within depressed areas. In addition, the law furnished federal assistance to a depressed area's local government to assist its agencies with additional relief services.<sup>59</sup> This program was of limited value to

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86th Cong., 1st sess., 1959, p. 3; Larry W. Burt, *Tribalism in Crisis: Federal Indian Policy, 1953-1961* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), pp. 70-72; Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report: The Story of the Eisenhower Administration* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1961), p. 362.

56. *Area Redevelopment*, pt. 2, pp. 902-3.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 938-39.

58. *Sioux Indian Tribes, North and South Dakota*, p. 96.

59. Alan B. Batchelder, *The Economics of Poverty* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966), pp. 144-45.

390 *South Dakota History*

reservations because it attempted only to relieve the effects of poverty, such as unemployment; it did not seek to end reservation poverty by destroying causes associated with historical underdevelopment. Besides, the legislation emphasized industrial development and did not assist South Dakota's regional agricultural economy, which the reservations marginally served. Finally, the legislation neither encouraged industry to seek reservation business locations nor advocated local economic planning.

Congress corrected some shortfalls of the area redevelopment legislation, particularly by stressing greater community involvement, economic development, and participation, when it created the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in 1964. Under the guidance of the first director, R. Sargent Shriver, OEO issued grants to local communities that had designed their own antipoverty programs. Sioux reservation leaders closely followed the OEO legislation and supported the law's concept. The Pine Ridge Tribal Council requested federal antipoverty assistance in 1963, the same year that Henry Kranz, a member of President John F. Kennedy's poverty study group, visited the reservation. Because widespread rural poverty was synonymous with reservation life, specific tribal OEO programs such as Indian Community Action Program (ICAP) and the Indian Branch of the Special Field Programs were created. Today, Project Head Start and Legal Services remain OEO legacies.<sup>60</sup>

60. Mizen, *Federal Facilities for Indians*, pp. 25-26; Sar A. Levitan and Barbara Hetrick, *Big Brother's Indian Programs—with Reservations* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1971), pp. 90-91.

*Improvements in housing were one outgrowth of the economic development programs of the 1960s. In this scene at Rosebud, a new house is being built next to an older home.*





Unlike past economic development programs administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, OEO required tribal participation and stressed improving both reservation educational opportunities and living conditions. Tribal organizations created Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC), recognizing growing reservation juvenile problems, but the OEO programs largely bypassed adult issues. Job training for permanent employment and long-term reservation economic development, both essential to ending chronic underdevelopment, were not included in the range of OEO programs. Despite OEO shortcomings, this non-Bureau of Indian Affairs program stressed tribal self-determination and instilled confidence among the state's reservation populations, a confidence necessary to overcome past federal constraints associated with tribal assumption of greater self-rule.

The need to exercise more tribal self-rule was only one of many new demands the state's reservation populations encountered from 1934 to 1965. Increased tribal governance, based on federal assistance, placed multi-million-dollar figures in tribal council budgets by the mid-1960s and partially realigned reservation dependency away from the Bureau of Indian Affairs toward other federal agencies. In short, the tribesmen gained greater participation in the decisions affecting reservations but did not gain materially greater tribal sovereignty. Though reservation political autonomy remained diluted, tribal exertion of sovereignty changed tribal-state relations, laying the foundation for inevitable jurisdiction conflicts with the state in the years to come.<sup>61</sup>

In this time of transition and flux on the reservations, residents witnessed an urban migration that reallocated tribal populations and problems (and conflicts), the addition of wage employment in tribal economies, increased state services, and continued government intervention in tribal life. Declining ranching and farming opportunities, increasing unemployment, and a declining standard of living were also conspicuous elements of South Dakota's reservation experience. Life on the reservations primarily changed for the worse as the various programs established to diminish Sioux country's historical underdevelopment failed.

61. For more on jurisdiction, see Richmond L. Clow, "State Jurisdiction on Sioux Reservations: Indian and Non-Indian Responses, 1952-1964," *South Dakota History* 11 (Summer 1981): 171-84.

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