

PUEBLO INDIANS IN PLEA FOR JUSTICE

Delegation Asks Winnetka's Aid

A group of seven Pueblo Indians from New Mexico made a plea for justice and fair dealing at the hands of the American government at a meeting held last Tuesday evening in the Kuppenheimer Memorial Assembly Room of the Skokie School. The Indians wore their native ceremonial costumes and gave several songs and a dance.

Mr. John Collier, who spent the last year living among the Pueblo Indians, presented their case. The Pueblo Indians have always been a peaceable, agricultural people who have maintained themselves on land made fertile by a system of irrigation that goes back hundreds of years. The Spaniards confirmed these Indians in the lands on which they found them and after New Mexico and Arizona became a part of the United States their lands and water rights were again confirmed by solemn treaty and congressional statute. In 1863 President Lincoln asked that the governor of each of the Pueblos visit him in Washington to receive the thanks of the government for the aid their people had rendered the Union troops during the Civil War. At this time President Lincoln presented to each governor a silver-headed cane duly inscribed and these canes are the symbols of authority that pass from governor to governor of the various Pueblos.

Since the governors visited President Lincoln in 1863 no other delegation of Pueblo Indians has been East until now. Although they are the wards of the government and legally and morally entitled to its protection, people have been allowed to

take their lands and steal their water in violation of solemn treaty and congressional enactment and despite the assurance of President Lincoln that their rights to their lands would be forever inviolate.

These encroachers have no legal title and can be ousted by the government. But a bill was recently introduced into the United States Senate by Senator Bursum of New Mexico, which, if enacted into law, would confirm the title of these trespassers and thus, in other ways, destroy the Pueblo life. The Bursum Bill has had the active support of Mr. Albert B. Fall, Secretary of the Interior, who has put it forward as an administration measure. A companion bill known as the Snyder Bill has been introduced in the Lower House. The Pueblo Indians and their friends are seeking to defeat both the Bursum and the Snyder Bills. More than this, they are asking for the passage of the Jones-Leatherwood Bill, which will confirm such rights as are left to them and give them some affirmative relief in the way of an irrigation project, which, if put through, would be of benefit both to them and to the white citizens of New Mexico.

The story of injustice and callous disregard for the rights of the Pueblo Indians, as related by Mr. Collier, was a moving one. Not a person who heard him but felt a keen sense of indignation that high government officials should deliberately plot to destroy a wonderful pre-historic civilization and that by the slow and brutal method of starvation. These Indians have not been maintained at public expense as have, in large measure, the reservation Indians. They have been peaceful, law-abiding and self supporting. They have lived in settled towns for hundreds of years cultivating fields they have themselves rescued from the desert. Their form of government is a democratic one. They elect their governor by popular vote every year. They are kindly, gentle and self-respecting and all they are asking from the government is that it keep its written and spoken word and allow them the land and water necessary for their self support by their own labor.

Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, after spending some time among the Pueblos, wrote of them. "The Pueblo life is one of our most precious possessions. Let us cherish it tenderly and proudly!"

A Chicago organization has been formed under the name of the "Indian Rights Association of Chicago," to help these Indians in their fight for justice. Mr. Carter H. Harrison is Chairman of this Committee, Mr. Ralph Fletcher Seymour is Secretary and Mrs. Harold L. Ickes of Hubbard Woods, Treasurer. Out of their slender resources these Indians have succeeded in raising about \$3,500 to send the delegation to Washington. To do this it was necessary in many cases to sell their trinkets and even their horses because the Pueblo Indians, thanks to the American Government's breach of faith, have been barely able for years to eke out a mere existence. The belief was ex-

pressed that public spirited citizens will want to reimburse the Indians for outlays unjustly made necessary and contributions were solicited to be sent to the treasurer of the local association. Citizens were also requested to write to Senators and Representatives urging defeat of the Bursum and Snyder Bills and the passage of the Jones-Leatherwood Bill.

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