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American Indian Plank for Republican and Democrat National Conventions, Undated

American Indian Plank

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AMERICAN INDIAN PLANK TO BE PRESENTED TO
THE REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL
CONVENTIONS FOR ADOPTION.

We pledge the _____ Party to a permanent settlement of the Indian question, which has been before the country for half a century. For the past fifty years every Congress has been flooded with Jurisdictional Bills to confer upon Indian tribes the right to go before the courts to establish their alleged claims. The Court of Claims was established in 1855, and since that day Indian claims in the total amount of \$2,187,000,000.00 have been before that body; the total recovery to Indians in this court during these 85 years has amounted to \$30,000,000.00, or less than 2% of the amount claimed. Many more cases are pending in which the Indians have been refused by Congress the right to present their claims before this Court.

In all these years the Indians have been travelling to and from Washington annually at great expense to themselves and their tribal funds to look after their claims. Many such cases have lasted until all witnesses and attorneys have died. This is the situation which the Indian Question presents to the country.

We propose to end this controversy by passing a bill providing for a Claims Commission of three members appointed by the President, one of whom shall be an Indian of at least 50% Indian blood. This Commission shall be empowered to hear all Indian claims of any Indian tribe or Band of whatever origin and regardless of the lapse of time or regardless of any prior settlement and determine what is justly and equitably owing to such band or tribe by the United States; whenever said Commission shall approve a claim in whole or in part, the same shall be certified to the Treasurer of the United States for payment. Either party shall have, as a matter of right, an appeal to the Supreme Court on questions of law and equity. The findings of fact by the Commission shall be conclusive. In cases where settlements have been made under circumstances which the Commission finds to be unjust to the Indians, any amounts so paid on said claims shall be set off against any amount found to be due said Indians. In cases where payments of money have been made by the Government for the direct benefit of the Indians, or in cases where lands have been purchased and granted to Indians, for the direct benefit of any tribe or band, amounts thereof may be deducted from any amount found due to any such tribe or band by the Claims Commission.

Monies expended by the Government for the maintenance of the Indian Bureau or general relief shall not be deducted from the amount found to be due any such tribe or band.

All alleged Indian claims of any tribe or band of Indians not filed with the Claims Commission in a period of six years from the date of the passage of such Claims Commission Act, shall be forever barred from any further consideration by any agency of the United States Government.

After the payment of all claims which said Commission shall find to be due the Indians of the United States and Alaska, the Federal jurisdiction over the lives and property of the Indians shall cease. The Indians shall henceforth be considered full citizens of the United States with all the rights, privileges and limitations of all citizens. In cases where the United States at the end of said six years, holds any land in trust for any tribe or band of Indians, the same shall be allotted severally in accordance with the trust imposed upon the United States Government. In cases where that cannot be done because of the incompetency of any Indian or because of unsettled estates, said lands shall be deeded to the State where such tribe or band lives with the same trust imposed upon the States that now rests on the United States Government.