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## Letter from John Hamilton to Senator Langer Regarding a Radio Script Used for American Indian Day, September 24, 1945

John Hamilton

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## National American Indian Defense Association, Inc.

Headquarters: 22 Arnold Street,    Telephone 6-1187    HARTFORD 6, CONNECTICUT

We Need a Chance too. What is Our Future?



Thousands like these little American Indians need our Protection and Help

(4) OUR AIMS:

- To promote the general welfare of the American Indians,
- By protecting and safeguarding their Constitutional and Civil Rights,
- By advocating an emancipated citizenship.
- By promoting their health and educational opportunities, and by fostering their Arts and Crafts.

September 24, 1945.

Honorable William Langer,  
Senate Office Building,  
Washington, D. C.

My dear Senator Langer:

I am enclosing herewith a copy of my radio script in reference to American Indian Day in Connecticut which is September 28th. In this address you can see that I am bringing out the fundamental facts concerning the dealings between the Government and our American Indian wards.

I thought perhaps you might want to use this radio address in conjunction with the petition in which I sent to you a few days ago.

It may be possible for you to get this radio speech and the language in the petition into the Congressional Record. This would help considerably to enlighten the American people of the present-day deplorable conditions of the Indians.

We deeply appreciate all you are doing for the interest of the Indians in your State as well as those in other States throughout the country.

I shall be glad to hear from you again at your earliest convenience.

With every good wish to you and your family, please believe me, I am

JEH:O

Enclosure:

Very respectfully,

*John E. Hamilton*  
John E. Hamilton,  
National President.

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

Honorable William Langer, United States Senate

AMERICAN INDIAN DAY IN CONNECTICUT.

September 28, 1945.

PLACE: WTHH

DATE: September 27, 1945.

TIME: 11:30 to 11:45 P.M.

ANNOUNCER:

Once again American Indian Day is being observed in Connecticut. The presentation of this broadcast will be by Mr. John E. Hamilton, National President of the National American Indian Defense Association; who is an authority on the subject of American Indian affairs in the United States, and who has spent a considerable amount of time in studying their past and present-day conditions.

I now present Mr. Hamilton.

SPEAKER

Tomorrow will be Indian Day in Connecticut, which will be observed in the public schools and colleges of this State, as a day of commemoration of the American Indian, and his contribution to American life and civilization.

Before I proceed with the following remarks concerning one of the earliest and one of the most important minority groups of the American Democracy, I wish to call attention to the fact, that I am entirely convinced that the time has come when the Congress of the United States, and the people of this country, should be told the truth about the shameful way in which our own Government has treated its American Indian wards.

So the question is: How has our own country properly treated its oldest and most persisting minority, the American Indians; how has it treated them, and how is it treating them now? This is a very important question.

The paleface people in this country may still condemn the confiscation of private property; but they should at the same time remember their own record of confiscation right here in the United States of America. They should recall their own actions in regard to people within our own borders. They should remember some of their own faults, and some of the things they have done.

I am not condemning the present generation as wholly responsible for the evils of an earlier generation, but I do call to the attention

of all paleface people in the United States who are now engaged in protesting violence, murder, rape, confiscation, suppression, that they consider some of the things now concerning our own people, or one element of our population which by any measure of justice puts us in the same class with those in other lands of which we now currently complain. Let me give you a contemporaneous illustration:

With a few unimportant exceptions, all American Indian tribes were originally placed on so-called reservations. The reservation system is not only a curse to the American Indians; but it is a disgrace to our National honor.

The American Congress inaugurated the Reservation system. This was done partly as a military measure, so as to confine the Indians to these so-called reservations, and to open up the rest of their territory to paleface settlement.

Many of the Indian tribes strenuously objected to the reservation system. It was a severe restraint on the freedom they had enjoyed from time immemorial.

The American Indians were all, of course, free at that time; and they had to be curbed and ruled, and that with the iron hand of military authority. The reservations must have paleface Indian agents, and with each agent a company of soldiers to carry out orders, and good strong jails, with bread and water, ball and chains. Thus was the American Indian denied liberty, and his pursuit of happiness; and thus passed forever

from him the open and free latch-string, and entered padlocks and policemen. No longer the sacred pledge of honor, but instead broken treaty<sup>100</sup> and paleface men's hypocrisy. With the Indians securely rounded up and corraled on Reservations at a great distance from the teeming millions of freedom-loving paleface Americans, the United States Government set up what is now known as the Indian Office, or the Indian Bureau, with headquarters in Washington, about as far away from the Indians as it was possible to get. The job was to keep the Indians inside the Reservation prisons. Rules and regulations, and orders and directions, were printed by the volume. It was a complete isolation, and an absolute segregation; and still the basic idea was to have the races learn to commingle and amalgamate.

For fifty years this injustice and farce has been perpetrated upon a race of people, until today the Indian Bureau has grown into a strong and mighty institution. From its original and perhaps well-meaning intent, it has become a heartless and evil system, a political wire-pulling establishment. Instead of giving them their rights, and even a modicum of responsibility, it keeps them from the Indians, and militates against the natural laws of development. The American Indians were all free men once; but today they are far, very far indeed, from freedom, under the Indian Bureau system. Today the Bureau strives by every action to perpetuate the incompetency brought down upon and injected into the Indian reservation environment; and its every endeavor is to strengthen its hold upon the throat of the Indian: and while the American Banners float on every sea throughout the world, proclaiming "The land of the free, and the home of the brave," the Indian Bureau grinds down the American Indian by the most arbitrary misuse and abuse of power. Were the true facts of the Indian Bureau's abuse of authority

made known in its fullest extent to the American people, there would be a storm of righteous indignation that would shake the very foundation of government; but the facts are largely concealed or denied or misrepresented or ignored, and the Indians continue to die in abnormal numbers, to live in diseased and unwholesome surroundings, and to be literally slaves, objects of detestation to the employees of this Indian Bureau.

The whole management of the American Indians takes place utterly without the consent of the Indians themselves, instead of any increasing responsibility. The Indian Bureau makes and unmakes rules and regulations for the Indians; allots the Indians' lands; acts as their real-estate agent; buys, sells, mortgages, leases; condemns, ploughs, plants, harvests; ruins the Indians' lands; and then photographs the Indian standing by the Agency barns. The Indian Bureau acts as banker, as attorney, as judge, as prosecuting agent, as defendant's lawyer, as doctor, as nurse, as teacher, as spiritual director, and is most busy as undertaker and as funeral director for the Indian.

If the American Indian lives through all this, the Bureau refuses him his freedom when he reaches his maturity, which the Indian Bureau makes synonymous with "competency." Coming or going, the American Indian gets it.



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The Indian Bureau tells Indian mothers just how to raise their babies; mothers that have raised babies better, stronger, healthier, than before the Bureau ever appeared. It gives jobs to people to do the telling. I do not know of any other place in our civilized world, in which there is being attempted what the American Government is attempting now, and has been attempting for more than one hundred years past, with the American Indian population; namely, to perpetuate a race, set off to itself, in a government such as ours. There is just as much reason for separating the Mexicans and the Puerto Ricans and the Jews and the Negroes, and various other races, the Irish, the Polish, the Scotch, the Scandinavians, and every other kind of race, from the rest of the paleface population. Enforced control of the American Indian race, as has been done, and is continuing even to the point of practical physical enslavement, will never solve the American Indian problem with justice to the Indians. The pitiful condition of thousands of our Indian people today is but the natural product of the system.

All authority in Indian affairs arises in and flows from Congress. The American Indians have no court of appeal from the authority of Congress. In fact, they have no fundamental rights, because there can be no judicial review of any action taken by Congress concerning them. One Congress can grant the Indians something; and the next Congress can take it away, or completely nullify it by other legislation.

The American Indians are governed by direct laws of Congress, which apply to no other people in the United States. Why should the Indians be subject to special laws and regulations, any more than other citizens in this country? The American Indians were made citizens by

the act of Congress in June, 1924. Although many of them became voters through the act, the Indian Bureau continues to manage all of their affairs for them; and they are now merely "voting wards."

There are not two grades or classes of citizenship in America today, under law. Therefore, under law, no paleface Americans, or any other class of individuals, have citizenship rights superior to those of the American Indians. Apparently no one will dispute this fact; but in practice the rights which apply in general to other citizens are systematically denied the American Indians under control of Federal law. In other words, it is nothing else but special class legislation.

The majority of the American Indians want to be free from further control of their person, and to be allowed to live under local, State, and Federal laws, like any other citizen; to enjoy the full benefits of public school education; in fact, to have the benefits and responsibilities of all laws and regulations to which other citizens are entitled, without special dictation. It is plain that only through bringing the Indians to competent citizenship will they ever be able to pass from Bureau to full care of themselves and their property; and that this is the only way to relieve the Government, and change them from being absorbers to producers of the Nation's wealth.

No material progress is ever made except under pressure, in the direction toward which we are aiming. The tribal masses should be disbanded; and the sooner, the better and healthier for the individual Indian. Real independent and useful citizenship must come; and the sooner that can be accomplished, the better in every way for the Indian and the Government. It is impossible that both tribe and Government can successfully utilize the individual. High loyalty to United States citizenship is impossible where loyalty to the tribe predominates.

The time is ripe for radical changes, and for the elimination of all false, ineffective, and noneffective methods, and for the up-building which will accomplish such regeneration, civilized usefulness and happiness for the Indians as may still be secured from the much wrecking of their health and manhood.

The principles which will accomplish these results are embodied in our Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, and therefore need no apology.

In my estimation the Government is perpetuating wardship instead of citizenship, and that the American Indians are retained indefinitely under Indian Bureau control and domination, instead of the Government making them full fledged American citizens, and, as we say, we are a free country, and our purpose has been to see that we should free those within our borders; but, instead of that, with the American Indians, the paleface people seem to be clamping down with a method of procedure that does rather the opposite. The American Indians must become a part of this American citizenship. That is the only hope for the Indian race.

Notwithstanding the lures of family, tribe, land, etc., and both the persuasions and forces of the Indian Bureau, a considerable number of American Indians, prepared and persuaded thereto, have quit their tribes, and are so successfully living in our communities as self-supporting citizens as to show conclusively that what is here contended for is not difficult of accomplishment.

Take 100 American Indians, in middle life, from any tribe today, without any knowledge of the English language or our American life, entirely separate them from each other; immerse them in our communities; encourage them to work along our lines, and in a week or two every

one of them will want their hair cut, and will of their own volition strive to make themselves very useful. In six months they will be understanding and speaking English. In three years they will be so saturated and filled with our American civilization as to be not only entirely willing but anxious to quit their old Indian life forever and live among the paleface people, and would do that if not bought or persuaded to the contrary by a selfish mismanagement. This is not theory: it is a proven fact, through my own experience in dealing with old and tenaciously tribal Indians who have had the courage to leave their reservation life and tribal masses and enter into the paleface man's society.

Despite the handicaps under which the American Indian has labored for so many years, the Indian has made remarkable progress. The race has produced great writers, athletes, and statesmen. Former Charles A. Eastman, of the Great Sioux Nation, achieved world-wide recognition as an outstanding author and lecturer. Chief Henry Standing Bear, another Sioux Indian, is also known as a great Indian writer. The Carlisle football teams ranked among the best in the country; and this school turned out American Indian citizens who would be a credit to any nation. Our immortal Will Rogers was also part Cherokee Indian. Former Charles W. Curtis, Vice President of the United States, had Kaw Indian blood in his veins. Speaking of Charles Curtis, I believe if Mr. Curtis had lived, he would have been the President of the United States. I am firmly convinced that the time has now arrived for the consideration of an American Indian for the President of the United States. Why not an Indian? This is his country, and the only country he has ever known from time immemorial. The American Indian should be given every opportunity to run for this exalted position. I am unqualifiedly in favor of having an American Indian as the next President of the United States.

In concluding this address, I should like to mention the fact, that I shall be very glad to answer any reasonable questions that you may wish to ask, regarding the present-day American Indian problem in the United States, if you will write to me in care of Station WTHT.

Thank you.

ANNOUNCER:

During the past fifteen minutes you have been listening to a special broadcast in observance of "Connecticut American Indian Day." The presentation of this broadcast was made by Mr. John E. Hamilton, National President of the National American Indian Defense Association.