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*Exhibit A*

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
UNITED STATES INDIAN SERVICE,

Oneida School, Wisconsin,  
October 14, 1909.

To the Oneida Indians:

Some members of the tribe have complained to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs against the issue of patents in fee, as being contrary to the Dawes Act (Feb. 8, 1887); against the organization of Hobart township as being illegal; and against taxes being levied and collected on reservation lands and personal property.

It was a part of my work here to investigate these matters, and that all may understand me alike, I set forth below a few conclusions as to the law and the rights of the State and the Indians.

- 1 While the Dawes Act provided that the lands allotted should be held 25 years, congress has since changed this law so as to allow some of the lands to be sold and so that allottees capable of handling their own affairs could get their patents in fee before the 25 years were up.  
Congress has a right to change these laws, and it did not need to ask the Indian tribes whether they were willing.  
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- 2 When congress changed the law so as to allow some lands to be sold and some patented it provided that all lands thus sold or patented might be taxed by the state. This can be done whether the deeds or patents are recorded at the county seats or not.
- 3 The State has a right to organize a town government in the Oneida reservation, and when such organization has been made the assessor has a right to assess the lands and personal property (except lands not patented). If the owners fail or refuse to pay the taxes the property may be sold, but in case of lands the purchaser does not get a deed for three years, during which three years the owner may pay the taxes (including all costs and interest) and thus keep his land.
- 4 The organization of the town of Hobart was at first thought to be illegal by many of the land owners, and it may have been. All but a few land owners have now paid their taxes rather than go to law, and my advice to the Indians is to do the same. It would cost a great deal of money to go to law, and you might lose. Even if the first organization should be illegal, another organization could be made that would correct the errors of the first.

- 5 Personal property belonging to the Oneida allottees, and not given them by the Government, may be taxed whether such allottees have a patent in fee for their lands or not. Each person has a right to know what personal property is assessed against him, and if mistake is made it should be reported to the proper county officials for correction.
- 6 The Oneida allottees are citizens just as much before getting patents in fee as afterward, and have a right to vote or hold office, buy or sell (except lands not patented), sue or be sued, the same as white citizens.
- 7 When an Indian gets his patent in fee he does not lose any tribal rights to annuities or other benefits he had before his land was patented.
- 8 The State has nothing to do with the old Indian council, and instead of the council it offers the election and the ballot box. It is the duty of each Indian voter to go to the election and vote for good, honest men, who will take good care of the tax moneys, and in that way speak for what they want instead of the old way in council. Each citizen Indian must also see that his rights are protected just as white men do, for the State does not look after that as the Government has done for you in the past.
- 9 The Government can not interfere with the State in organizing town governments or collecting taxes on lands sold or patented. But the officers of the Government may advise the Indians in all such matters, either before or after they get their patents in fee.
- While the Government turns the land loose when it gives patents in fee, and the Indians may then do with the land as they please, it would be safer for them to advise with the Superintendent before doing any thing with the land, and especially all who can not read or write should bring to him all papers about their lands and have them read and explained before signing them. Let him tell you what it is before putting your name to it, for he will charge you nothing and it may save you your land later.

Very respectfully,

*Charles H. Davis*  
Supervisor.