

Robert LaFollette, Jr. M.S.S.

Box 412 Superior, Wis.

File: Indian Affairs

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INDIAN FIELD SERVICE

Tomah Indian School,
Tomah, Wisconsin,
July 18, 1929.

Senator Robert M. LaFollette, Jr.,
Madison, Wisconsin.

Dear Senator:

In compliance with your request, I submit herewith a list of the enrollment at Tomah School for the fiscal year 1929 by tribes, viz:

Chippewa	227	Pottawatomie	16
Menominee	2	Sioux	1
Mohawk	1	Stockbridge	17
Oneida	83	Winnebago	84
		Total	431

Our average attendance for last year was 362 pupils. There were a number of children who enrolled and were excused for various legitimate reasons. You spoke of the number of runaways from Tomah and I find upon reference to the school records that there were 82 runaways during the last fiscal year. Two thirds of these runaways occurred in the first two or three weeks of school, very few after the middle of the year. These children came in from various sections of the country, many of them from the Chippewa country in Minnesota, and ran away without any cause whatever except loneliness and lawlessness. However, a number of the 82 were repeaters. At least four did not leave until school was out. They took "French leave" whatever that may mean. We will cut this number considerably this year.

There is great need of a general hospital for the Winnebago Indians. Such a hospital should be located at Tomah and be maintained as a separate organization from the school hospital. It should be located at Tomah for various reasons, particularly for railroad facilities which means cheaper freight and less administration overhead.

When you get back to Washington, I am going to send you a copy of my advance estimated needs for 1931. In this I have set up a building program which would permit us to give a high school course for those who are able to take it and a vocational course for those unable to master the academic course. Our aim should be to finish our product; those who finish the academic course to go on to higher schools; those who take the vocational training to be graduated from our schools when they are able to perform some work worthy of a living wage.

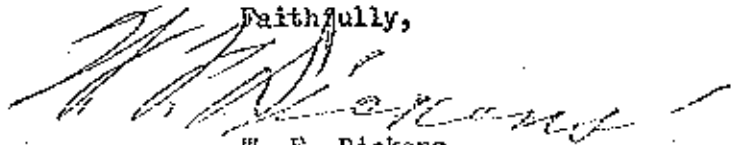
We waste time in our efforts to develop the adult Indian into a self supporting citizen. We have failed to boost him over the apex of his transition in our schools because of our limited course. Sure we give courses in our non-reservation schools, but only a very small per cent of reservation Indians can be induced to leave the reservation even though they receive free transportation and schooling. For years I have urged that every reservation boarding school give the equivalent of a high school course. The salvation of the Indian, or the solution of the Indian problem lies within the walls of some adequate educational institution. Get the children young--You can lead the old bucks up to the watering trough but you can't make 'em drink. We have to take care of the old and indigent. They are really grateful and give us the least trouble, but some of the younger ones need to be told where to head in. They refuse intelligent aid. They accept all the privileges of citizenship but avoid any of its responsibility. There are exceptions of course.

The Indian Bureau is a sort of a set up, and the Indian is keen enough to ride him to a finish. Of course some are poverty stricken due to their own improvidence. I don't blame them any, they're Indians, and that's their way. A maudlin misguided sympathy is a great stumbling block as we simply have to tell these people to work or go hungry. I'm besieged daily by worthless, good for nothing, able bodied Indians for a support order, payable from gratuitous appropriations. Indians drive to my office 50 and 70 miles in an automobile and seek aid pleading that the Government ought to take care of them because they are Indians. Get them a job and they won't work.

I don't permit any man to say he is a better friend to the Indian than I. I count among my dearest friends, Indians of several tribes, nevertheless I have to blush at many of their traits of character.

I did not start to write a thesis on the American Indian,
but wish that you might regard him as I have learned to know him.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'W. F. Dickens', written in dark ink.

W. F. Dickens,
Supt. & S.D.A.

D:HG