

A STUDY
OF THE ONEIDA INDIANS OF WISCONSIN

by the
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS, APPLETON, WISCONSIN

1956

The Oneida Indians originally came from the state of New York. In 1821 the Oneidas sold their land in New York and moved to the east central portion of Wisconsin. After several treaty negotiations final settlement came in 1838 establishing a 65,000 acre reservation for the Oneidas in what is now Brown and Outagamie counties. They cleared the land, built log houses, formulated their own laws and became chiefly self supporting.

When, in 1906, as a result of the General Allotment Act, the land was turned over to individual Oneidas in fee simple and the charging of taxes began, the life of the Oneidas began to change. Inability to keep up with the taxes, unscrupulous practices by the whites, mortgaging of the land to obtain money, foreclosures, poor management, and inexperience in legal affairs caused such a rapid loss of land that by 1930 only a little over 1,000 acres remained in Oneida hands. The old ways of living had largely disappeared. Loss of their land and growth of the surrounding white population forced increasing inter-action with the whites and absorption of white culture. Men found employment in Green Bay and surrounding towns and Oneida children attended district schools.

The economic crisis of the thirties brought severe privation to the Oneidas and they were forced to seek relief from the Federal Government. Government aid was the only alleviation of their serious economic problem. Under the provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 the Oneidas drew up a constitution and by-laws and formed a tribal organization, thereby re-establishing an agency for united group action. Over 1900 acres of good farm land were purchased by the government for the tribe and a revolving loan fund was established.

Today there are approximately 4,000 on the tribal roll, 1500 of whom live on what was formerly the reservation, an area around the village of Oneida between Appleton and Green Bay. Approximately two-thirds of this group live in the Town of Oneida in Outagamie County and one-third in the Town of Hobart in Brown County.

Due to the fact that the Oneidas are not living on a reservation, nor are subject to any federal regulations, they enjoy all the services set up for all citizens of the state in the fields of Public Welfare, Education, Law Enforcement, and Highway Maintenance.

According to 1950 statistics, of the 3,527 on the tribal roll,
1423 or 40.5% were living in the area mentioned above (200 families).
902 or 25.6% were living in large cities (Milwaukee has about 500.
The Oneida began to settle there in the 1920's and was the earliest Indian group in the city).
457 or 13.0% were living in small towns.
13 or 0.4% were living in Canada.
760 or 20.5% addresses unknown.

In May 1953, at one of the semi-annual tribal council meetings at Oneida, the decision was made to increase the amount of Oneida "blood" from one-quarter to one half for any new additions to the tribal roll. The payment of a one dollar fee by parents of a new child entitled that child to a place on the tribal roll and eligibility to any benefits or advantages that might be forthcoming such as Federal Government payments, etc. The reason for increasing the necessary percentage of Oneida "blood" may have been due to the hope that pending tribal land and timber claims are likely to be settled in the near future.

Most of the information regarding land ownership and agriculture was obtained from Oscar Archiquette, former tribal chairman.

The Oneidas are divided into two groups; those with land assignments and the landless. Of the approximately two hundred families in the Oneida area, 43 have been granted land use assignments on about 1,600 acres, 18 have been granted life use on 416 acres of tribal land. Approximately 75 families are landless and rent from non-Indians. The rest own taxable land and there are others owning taxable land who live elsewhere.

This common tribal land, under the direction of the Tribal Executive Committee is assigned to families with a prescription as to how many acres must be farmed. For land assignment, tribal members pay the Tribal Council a small fee to defray costs of land transfer, papers, etc., and assignments vary in size from one to ninety acres. (Only one of the latter). But the average allotment of 10-26 acres is too small for self support through farming, and some Oneidas with only one acre would farm if they had more land, while others with large enough assignments let the land lie idle and are employed elsewhere.

An assignee does not have to pay property taxes for the land which remains in the tribe's possession, but any improvements, or a dwelling he builds on that tribal land are his and if he is removed from the land, he must be reimbursed by the Tribe for his improvements. Land use assignments can be revoked by the Tribe whenever the assignee fails to comply with land assignment stipulations. The assignee is usually granted 30 days after 4 written notices are received from the Executive Committee.

According to Mr. Archiquette, however, the Tribal Executive Committee cannot, or will not evict those who are not using the land, nor revise the assignments so as to set aside small plots for those who only want to live on the land, and give larger allotments to those who want to farm. The Oneida group is so interrelated and jealous of one another that objectivity and enforcement of regulations by the Tribe itself seems to have been impossible.

Much of the land is still held up in probate; some of the land assignments have been passed down to heirs so many times that there may be as many as 30 or more heirs, and gaining the permission of each in order to sell unused land is sometimes a hopeless task.

The revolving loan fund mentioned above contains over \$33,000 and is available only to assignees, not to the homeless segment or to those on taxable land. In January 1950, over 200 loans had been made by the Tribe to individuals and 63 borrowers were delinquent in the amount of \$10,374.88. The Tribe is authorized to demand payment of the entire loan after a 30 day written notice to the borrower if he has failed to comply with any or all parts of the loan agreement. Original loans were to be repaid with interest, refinanced, and new loans were to bear interest for the Tribe at 3% per annum. Unfortunately, the same problems have arisen in regard to the loan fund as to land assignment. For a time, the fund dwindled to almost nothing because the Tribal Council was unwilling or unable to enforce repayment.

Agriculture as a Source of Income

In the opinion of Mr. Archiquette, "The Oneidas were never an agricultural people, but were hunters and unskilled without resources for farming. Whereas white men might build a farm with a big barn and silo first, the Indian would build a house first. They have not yet learned to make an investment in their land and livestock, and very little, if any, agricultural extension or other farming education is being done among them.

The Oneida land is in a good agricultural area where dairy farming predominates. The farms in the area send milk to the cheese factories and trucks from dairies in surrounding cities make milk pickups. Most of those Oneidas who farm, however, lack farm machinery, buildings, (especially silos and milkhouses), live stock and necessary capital for financing the purchases.

Mr. Archiquette felt that two things are essential to improve the farming situation: land redistribution and a tribal manager from the outside who could exert control --- perhaps an experienced farmer who could help with land re-assignment, farming problems, etc. He also thought it improbable, however, that such a man could be found who would also be accepted by men from the tribe.

Employment Opportunities

There are no employment opportunities in the Towns of Hobart and Oneida in factories or industry.

All local employment is on a seasonal basis. Oneida men may be employed as hired men for local farmers, the stone quarry nearby employs some and the Township of Oneida uses some occasionally for brush-cutting. The Guardian Angels Seminary in the Village of Oneida hires some Indian women for kitchen work, and recently, lacemaking under the supervision of Mrs. I. N. Webster, former post-mistress in Oneida Village has been gaining in popularity among the women. This is the extent of local adult employment and wages are very low in all types of work.

Many families do migrant labor around the state, picking apples, cherries and strawberries in Door County, and cranberries at Wisconsin

Rapids. The Green Bay WSES (Wisconsin State Employment Service) maintains a branch office in Sturgeon Bay during the cherry season. An Oneida crew leader is obtained and he makes all arrangements for dates of picking, housing and transportation.

Many Indians commute to Green Bay, West De Pere, Seymour, Appleton and Kaukauna to work if they have transportation.

Interviews were held with workers in the WSES offices in Green Bay, Appleton and Neenah-Menasha. The Green Bay WSES handles most of the Indian applications due to its proximity to the Oneida community. No record is kept of the race of an applicant and there is no discrimination in job placement by the WSES office, although employers may discriminate. According to caseworkers in the Brown County Public Welfare Department this is often the case.

Mr. Jarovetz of the Green Bay WSES reported no difficulty in placing qualified Indians as skilled industrial workers. But most of the male Indian applicants want only temporary employment as stevedores, construction workers or farm hands. Some do permanent farm work, while a maximum of 15-20 workers take day to day employment. One Green Bay firm uses a pool of Indian workers as stevedores, the majority coming from Oneida, the rest from Green Bay. Even alcoholics are used, since if one employee does not appear, another can be obtained from the pool.

In the summer of 1953 Oneida men could earn \$1.50 per hour in road construction which was enough to get them through the winter.

A majority of Indian women WSES applicants are unskilled and take either seasonal or permanent jobs in factories or as domestics or restaurant workers. The Green Bay WSES has placed some Indian office workers.

Mr. Gohrke of the Appleton WSES reported that he found difficulty in placing Indian men because they often proved unreliable by not reporting back to work after pay day. His office did about the same type of placement as the Green Bay WSES.

The Neenah-Menasha WSES reported that no discrimination by employers had been noted and that the small number of Oneidas (8 or 10) who use this branch of WSES move up the employment ladder if they have the necessary qualifications.

Resettlement

In 1952, the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, sponsored a Relocation Program for Wisconsin Indians, working through the Travelers Aid Society in Milwaukee. Government appropriations were made to enable Indians to move to outside communities from the reservations of home areas. Budget allowances were set up to provide for transportation and cost of moving household goods plus, roughly, \$30 per week for three weeks. Additional allowances could be made for dependents accompanying the head of the household. Since 1952, 50 Indians have used this program and only two were Oneidas, reports

Miss Maureen Sinnott, caseworker with the Travelers Aid. She points out that the Oneidas, being more acculturated may need less help in relocating.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that although some Oneidas are leaving their home area for jobs elsewhere, the great majority are not interested in resettlement. Dennison Hill, Tribal Chairman in 1953, felt that resettlement might be all right, but "if happy here, why should they live elsewhere?" Fear of insecurity may be a factor since most lack any skill or profession. One young man who commuted to West De Pere reasoned that living expenses in Oneida were lower.

Social Security and Public Welfare as a Source of Income

Social Security benefits cover a larger group of those eligible for Old Age Assistance now than in the past.

Public Welfare. 1950 population figures show the Town of Oneida to contain about 2.8%, both Indian and white, of the total Outagamie county population, whereas in July 1956, that township had 40 cases or 5% of the county's active Public Assistance case total of 745. This did not include 21 Foster Home cases.

The Aid to Dependent Children program consisted of 13 cases, mainly due to divorce, desertion, or illegitimacy, and cost the county in July 1956, \$1,169.75. The Old Age Assistance program, consisting of 25 cases, cost \$11,572.46 for that same month.

Total assistance, exclusive of Foster Home care for the county, during July 1956 was \$50,771.28 and of this \$2,841.46 was paid within the Town of Oneida. Assistance in that town equalled 5.6% of the total payroll for 5.4% of the total recipients in an area containing only 2.8% or less of the total population. Living expenses, particularly for shelter, are lower in Oneida than in more urban areas of the county, but assistance payments are higher because of decreased resources. Recipients living in more urban areas receive proportionately larger Social Security payments and also receive much greater contribution from relatives. These two factors more than offset the decreased living expenses in Oneida.

John Huff, Casework Supervisor for Outagamie County, who furnished the above information, stated, "While intensive casework in the Town of Oneida has been effective to a certain degree in preventing dependency and in other cases rehabilitating dependent persons to self-sufficiency, it has not shown the dramatic successes which are possible in areas of greater employment and higher salary schedules."

County Children's Board

Robert Barry, Director of the County Children's Board felt that there has been some change for the better in the Town of Oneida. His agency handles most delinquency and child neglect cases but he reported no delinquency cases had come through the County Juvenile Court in the

past 8 months. Neglect cases are still above the county average, probably due to drinking.

Foster Home placement is handled by the Children's Board and financed by the Public Welfare Department under the Aid to Dependent Children in Foster Homes (ADCF) program. In July 1956, ADCF was paid on behalf of 21 county children, 13 or 2/3 of whom were from the Township of Oneida. Only one foster home, however, is located in that township although foster homes are difficult to find for Oneida children and they usually feel happier in Oneida homes than elsewhere, according to Miss Renetta Meyer of the Wisconsin State Department of Public Welfare.

The total long term full time case load of the Children's Board, including ADCF mentioned above is 178, and of these, 30 cases or more than 1/6 are located in Oneida. Only one of the county's 39 cases on a short term basis or needing small attention over a longer period is from Oneida.

Town Relief

One of the main functions of the town government in regard to the Indian population is the administration of general relief to the needy, mostly in the form of groceries, fuel and some money. The Hobart and Oneida Town chairmen do the administrative work and the townships are reimbursed by the state for relief granted to eligible Indians on land assignments. In 1953, 25% of the relief load of the county was centered in the Town of Oneida.

Private Agencies

Various private agencies from Appleton and Green Bay, such as the Apostolate, handle cases from the Oneida area too. These include foster home placements and cases of unwed mothers. Private agencies and service groups also provide such things as used clothing and holiday food baskets.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Housing

Some of the homes are well kept and well furnished but housing conditions in many instances are incredibly bad. A large number of the homes are rented, some of the worst belonging to non-Indians who charge relatively high rent for poorly maintained buildings.

There is a general lack of sanitary facilities, central heating, insulation, storm windows, screens, electricity, telephones, refrigeration, running water and living space. Many large families live in tar paper shacks of two rooms, one room downstairs for living and one upstairs for sleeping.

Running water in the homes is rare due to high costs of well drilling and piping. A community well in Oneida village paid for originally and operated by the Federal Government furnishes water to village residents who carry it home in pails. Outside the village, residents carry all

their water from the nearest farm or home with a well.

Coal and wood are the usual source of heat and kerosene is used frequently for cooking and light. An Outagamie County Public Welfare Department caseworker told of visiting homes in the winter in which kerosene fumes were strong enough to make one ill. Bottle gas stoves and ice boxes have started to appear within the last few years. The Outagamie County nurse stated, "Many of their homes are sparsely furnished and poorly heated. It is not unusual to see young pre-school children playing barefooted or with very little clothing on in mid-winter."

The living standard is low generally, especially in the isolated homes, but improves around Oneida Village and West De Pere. Oneida residents of Green Bay live along the East River or on South Broadway and most of those in Milwaukee reside in the congested 6th Ward.

Health

Maternal and child. All Oneida children attending rural or city grade and high schools participate in the same health program that is available to all school children throughout the state, carried on by the teachers, county and school nurses.

The following comments were contributed by the Brown and Outagamie County nurses on the various phases of the school, pre- and post-natal and preventive T.B. health programs:

In regard to the vaccination, triple toxoid and polio immunization programs, the county health departments do not always receive the cooperation and participation they would like.

The majority of Oneida pre-school children are not immunized. (In Appleton the percentage is 75%). In school districts where teachers bring the children to clinics, attendance is much better than where transportation is left to parents. This may be due to lack of transportation or to the fact that Oneida parents do not realize the importance of immunization.

Not many Oneidas take advantage of the T.B. X-Ray Service which visits the community every two or three years. There seems to be no greater incidence of T.B. among the Oneidas than among non-Indians.

Referrals for pre-natal and post-natal care are very few. Most cases are found when the county nurse is visiting the home for an entirely different reason. It appears that pregnant women do not receive early pre-natal care. There are some home deliveries without proper medical personnel.

When school vision testing reveals the need for glasses, families usually are unable to provide them. Although both county nurses' offices offer financial assistance from organizations, the demand far exceeds the supply. The nurses also may secure financial assistance in providing corrective shoes, braces and other orthopedic aids.

The Outagamie County nurse reports that a majority of Oneida children are in dire need of dental care and that the situation could be improved if diets were adequate and good dental hygiene maintained.

Many schools participate in the surplus milk program to supplement lunches brought from home. Some of the schools participate in the hot lunch program but can claim federal reimbursement for only those Indian children who live on land assignments.

According to the Outagamie County nurse, diets, although better in summer, are generally inadequate, being especially deficient in milk, green and yellow vegetables, meat, fruit and citrus fruit. According to Mr. Archiquette, some of the families main diet during the winter is cornmeal or oatmeal, while gardens provide some variety in summer.

Town and Public Welfare Facilities. Both townships have Boards of Health, but authorization for medical care must come directly from the town chairman. No inspection is made of sanitary facilities or water supplies.

Public Assistance clients are given medical referral slips for prescriptions, medical and dental care or hospitalization. Costs are paid by the Public Welfare Department.

There are no doctors, dentists or drug stores in Oneida. Seymour, Green Bay and West De Pere facilities are used most frequently. The nearest hospitals are in Green Bay.

The Outagamie County nurse had this to say about Oneida acceptance of county health services: "The people in general are very sceptical of our services...it is quite difficult for them to understand that we are only trying to help them."

EDUCATION

Elementary

All of the Oneida area, including the village in which there is no public school, is organized into school districts with school bus service and all the grade school children attend rural public schools except for a number whose district has been attached to the City of Seymour district.

The Episcopal parochial school in the village, with three teachers teaching by their own request under county supervision, is the only school with all Indian pupils. Some attend a Catholic school near the village.

Most of the Indian children remain in school until they are sixteen. Their schooling often ends with the 8th grade unless the pupil is very bright and eager to go on. Adequate clothing is a problem, especially for high school students, and those from the poorer families experience feelings of inferiority due to their lack of clothing and other material possessions. Community and adult attitudes about the need for a high school education are also a contributing factor.

School buses transport junior and senior high school students to the schools within their district lines, either at Seymour, Freedom, Green Bay or De Pere.

According to the Outagamie County Superintendent of Schools, there has been considerable improvement in enrollment and attendance in the last few years, due to concerted action by the Superintendent's office, school administrations and teachers. Extra-curricular activities, better bus service and the hot lunch program all have helped to increase attendance.

Secondary

At Seymour High School during the 1955-56 school year, there were 49 Oneida students, 3 of whom were June graduates. At Freedom High School there were 20 enrolled, 3 of whom graduated. Both principals felt that the future would bring a higher enrollment and fewer dropouts than the considerable number in the past.

At Freedom High School all Oneida students participate in the hot lunch program although the school administration can claim reimbursement for only the 2 who live on land assignments. It was felt that if the school charged for the meals of the others most of them would go without. One or two of the students at Freedom have had to have help in keeping clean and sufficiently clothed.

Both the Seymour and Freedom principals stated that there was ready acceptance of the Oneida students. They participate actively in all phases of the extra-curricular program.

Miss Viola Krumm, assistant principal and guidance director at Washington Junior High School in Green Bay is mainly responsible for a plan in effect since 1945 to integrate Oneida pupils into the school program. This includes a pre-enrollment Orientation Day for all tuition pupils with a special bus for Oneida and special efforts to include Indian children in all phases of school life.

Miss Krumm supplied the following information in 1953: There were about 22 Oneidas in the 9th grade annually, with the usual number of dropouts in the sophomore year and few graduating.

A hot lunch program at East High School was not used by the Oneida students, but the girls have taken advantage of free lunches and milk made available to those in need of diet supplementation. Boys from Oneida were not interested.

Here too, acceptance of Oneida children has been good and extra-curricular activities have been participated in except when limited by transportation difficulties. In the past, extra buses have been sponsored by the school so that the Oneida students could attend a few of the school sports events.

Very few Oneida children attend any Bureau of Indian Affairs schools which give vocational training at the high school level. One Freedom High School graduate planned to attend Haskell Institute in Kansas this year.

Education Beyond High School

One of the Oneida adults with whom we talked said he felt there was little interest in higher education. Another said that if this were so he believed it to be because of commercial advertising and job offers which led young people to believe that there were sufficiently prepared academically for life at high school graduation.

One or two Oneida students attend the Green Bay Vocational School, and some of the girls are enrolled in Practical Nurse training programs at Theda Clark Hospital, Neenah.

There is some scholarship and loan fund help available. A Mrs. Ridgeway of De Pere has been instrumental in providing scholarships for college and nursing school for promising Oneida students through the D.A.R. and the Wisconsin Federation of Womens Clubs. The Federal loan fund is seldom, if ever, used.

Most of the young men go into military service and do not return to Oneida after having served except for family visits.

RELIGION

The Oneidas are chiefly Protestant, unlike most of the non-Indians among whom they live. According to Mr. Archiquette, there is little cooperation and fraternizing among the Catholic non-Indians and the Protestant Oneidas. This causes some housing and employment difficulties for the latter.

The largest groups of Oneidas belong to the Episcopal and Methodist Churches, but the Mormons, Lutherans and Church of Christ are active too. None of the churches are staffed by Oneidas. Two Catholic churches in the area serve mainly non-Indians.

Brown County Public Welfare Department caseworkers mentioned the incidence of religious "floating" particularly among the younger group who seemed to base their church preference on the type of program (religious, social, recreational) offered by the various churches.

According to Miss Meyer, the churches have opposed the exodus of Indians to other communities on the grounds that it tends to break up tribal customs and the emigrants seemed to fare no better elsewhere anyway.

RECREATION

There are few recreational facilities for youth, such as bowling, swimming, team sports, movies or skating. The churches have some activities including handicraft, in their parish halls but their use largely is limited to their own members. About half of the population is served thus but there are no large scale facilities for everyone.

What was formerly a C.C.C. camp was turned over to the Oneidas by the Federal Government in spring 1953. It consists of a small hall, wooded area and a baseball diamond developed by the Oneida young men. A baseball team was formed at that time, and a second team of Oneida boys is sponsored by the Episcopal Parish Hall. A third team is sponsored by one of the local taverns. All play regularly in the County league.

A recently opened drive-in food stand in Oneida Village serves as a hangout for the young people in the summer, but the only other gathering places are the four taverns in Oneida and two others within a half mile radius. A hall in connection with one of the taverns is used for dances and card parties. Some of the church groups and the V.F.W. Auxiliary sponsor occasional events primarily for adults such as card parties, suppers, dances, etc.

TRANSPORTATION

The problem of transportation affects many phases of Oneida life due to the relative isolation of the area, the poor quality of some of the roads and the oftentimes unreliable second-hand cars.

In wet weather, some of the red clay roads are as slippery as ice. In winter's snow, those who live some distance off the road must shovel their way out to get water, food, etc.

Car pools are used to a certain extent, but if a special trip into Green Bay or elsewhere must be made, it is usual to find someone who owns a car and pay him a certain amount to be taken to one's destination. The second-hand cars are costly to maintain.

There is regular school bus service, but a lack of adequate public transportation otherwise. A bus runs twice daily in each direction between Green Bay and Seymour, but not at convenient times for those employed or seeking recreation in either city.

Those Indians who can pay cash trade mainly in Green Bay at the large supermarkets. There are three stores in the Oneida area that carry charge accounts, but their prices are somewhat higher.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

An experiment in community organization was begun in 1943, instigated by the factors of lawlessness, alcoholism, child neglect, and juvenile delinquency. The Oneida-Hobart Welfare Committee was

organized --- the church groups giving leadership --- and aided by the Federal Indian Service and various public agencies of Brown and Outagamie Counties. Participants were both Indian and non-Indian.

"This committee inaugurated recreational programs for the entire family, aided in the establishment of active 4-H Clubs, set up a nursery school for Indian mothers in war work, established a library, and promoted various health clinics. The indirect results of the work of the committee showed a lessening in truancy, fewer cases of minors found in taverns, and a decline in arrests for drunkenness. The committee unfortunately had lost many of its outstanding leaders by 1946, and gradually the organization became inactive. Nevertheless, the Oneida Tribal Council itself still carries on a few of the original projects of the committee, recognizing the value to the community of recreational programs." (Footnote, page 28, Handbook on Wisconsin Indians, 1952, Governor's Commission on Human Rights).

At present, there are no existing 4-H Clubs among Oneida children in the Town of Oneida. Mrs. Schuster, of the Brown County Agricultural Extension Office, supplied the information that one of the three active 4-H Clubs in the Town of Hobart has Indian members. Difficulty has been experienced in getting leadership among Oneida adults or encouragement from parents.

A successful venture in community organization that has lasted is the Oneida Self-Help Association. Membership is on a voluntary basis. Members pay a small sum periodically, and then receive a certain amount for funeral expenses at the time of death.

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION

Although no statistics are available, it is generally conceded by some of the Oneidas, as well as by those who work with them, that alcoholism is one of the worst problems of the community.

Illegitimacy, desertion, divorce and the ensuing broken homes pose problems of proper support and care of the children involved. This problem has to be met in large part by the County Public Welfare Departments.

Some tribal leaders are much concerned with small children in bad homes. They feel that nothing can be done with the parents, but that the children could be worked with.

Juvenile restlessness is high. The incidence of vandalism, drinking, "riding around" in cars, and delinquent behavior in Green Bay's Pamperin Park were cited by various individuals with whom we talked in 1953.

A somewhat brighter side of the picture was presented by the Outagamie County Sheriff in 1956, who stated that fewer calls had been made to the sheriff's office in recent times concerning drunkenness and family problems. No vandalism reports have come

from Oneida since 1953. Traffic violations and drunken driving seem to be on the decline also. Bad brakes and bad lights on the cars have been a problem, but he thought an improvement in car ownership was contributing to the easier law enforcement situation there.

RELATIONS WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Although most of the Federal Government's relations with the Oneidas have ceased, the relationships still in effect are causing much concern among the Oneida people and those concerned with their affairs.

A treaty signed in 1794, honoring the Oneidas for their help to the United States in fighting the Revolutionary War, specified annual payments of fifty-two cents in cash to all members of the Wisconsin tribe. When issuing individual checks became unwieldy and expensive, the Federal Government, in 1952, offered the Oneida Tribe \$60,000 to buy out the treaty. This was rejected on the grounds that the cash settlement was too small, and in the hope that rejection would better the chances of negotiations on pending claims the tribe has against the Government.

When the annual payment of 1952 was made in a lump sum of \$1800, the Oneidas returned it. Since then, the payments have continued to pile up, and now total about \$9,000 available any time the tribe wants to accept it. No decision has been arrived at as yet on how it shall be disposed of.

Several methods of settling the treaty agreement have been proposed. Among those proposals made by an Oneida fact-finding board which met in Milwaukee in early 1952 are the following: Provision of more land for tribe members near Oneida, education of Oneidas in modern farming methods, provision of equipment and stock, provision for higher education among tribesmen, and a social center at Oneida.

Another matter of concern has to do with the possible termination of land holdings in Federal Trust status and the disposal of the revolving loan fund.

Although according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs spokesman at a recent regional meeting of the Great Lakes Area Indians, preparation for termination is perhaps a twenty-five to fifty-year proposition, involving more adult and child education and raising of living standards, some of the Oneidas are already fearful that when termination time arrives, those now holding land assignments will receive full ownership rights, and the landless will be left out except to divide the \$33,000 revolving fund.

There has been dissatisfaction on the part of the landless group too because only that segment on land assignments has benefited from the revolving loan fund, the hot lunch program, and various other Federal Government services.

Another fear is that if the presently tax free land becomes

taxable, its owners might lose it by inability or neglect in paying taxes. One tribal leader stated that he felt only a few of the assignees would be able to operate successfully without some aid. The same viewpoint was expressed by Fred Hill, Oneida Town Chairman, who was concerned about the possibility of the Town or County having to support those who became landless.

But some of the Oneidas are looking ahead and seeking solutions. Mrs. Chester Smith, secretary of the Tribal Council in 1953, stated that in the February 11, 1952 issue of the Appleton Post-Crescent there was a statement that "much of the reputed shiftlessness of Indians is a result of confusion. They don't know what to expect next..." One administration tells them to forget their language and customs and live like white men. Another comes along and encourages them to develop their own culture. The resulting confusion has killed much of the Indians' initiative, Mrs. Smith believes. She convinced the further belief that her people must learn the importance of three things: taxation, hospitalization, and insurance.

Mr. Archiquette, seconded by several other Oneidas present, had this to say about past and present governmental relationships, "The more we deal with the State of Wisconsin, the better off we'll be."

CONCLUSIONS

Over and over again, three main problems were reiterated by members of the Oneida Tribe, their leaders, by Town, County and State officials and case workers, and by everyone concerned with the situation.

The first is the need for sufficient employment opportunities. Second, they desperately need good recreational facilities. The cost of law enforcement, of destruction of property by vandals, of disabling accidents due to both drunken drivers and pedestrians, of illegitimacy, and of other direct and indirect results of the lack of proper recreational outlets is obvious.

Third, an improved or supplemental health education program, especially on a preventive basis, is particularly necessary in this blighted area, whose residents seem unable to derive the optimum value from the health program which serves the rest of the two counties. Fourth --- greater participation in adult education and vocational training programs.

At the risk of seeming to simplify a truly complex problem, the Appleton League of Women Voters, nevertheless, has a fourfold program suggestion.

We believe that it is important that the Oneida Indians have integrated aid that will better concurrently their economic, educational, health and recreational status. Help in one field without the others might prove futile.

Therefore, we are suggesting that a small industry located in the community, comparable to the one at the Lac du Flambeau Reservation, could help to change the economic picture dramatically. Obviously a successful business venture, chosen to suit their abilities, would increase their incomes and could thereby decrease the incidence of public relief dependency, poor health and living conditions, and even delinquency.

Local assets, according to Mr. Archiquette, are an estimated available work force of three hundred, including eighty women; a truck line and railway running parallel through the area; and the Oneida Indians' particular adaptability to small machines. It was the feeling of those Oneidas to whom we talked that many who had left the area would like to move back if a good source of income was available.

The community also needs recreational facilities for both children and adults. They should have, if possible, the advantage of vocational training, leadership training, and such programs as 4-H Club work, Agriculture Extension education for both men and women, a knowledge of taxation, citizenship, and land use, and a better working relationship among themselves. The youth, particularly, needs recreational facilities and organization to help them set a pattern of wholesome living. Health standards might be improved by community-wide education and an improved economy.

To end on a brighter note, we agree with Miss Renetta Meyer of the State Department of Public Welfare who has worked many years with the Oneidas. She points out that the Oneidas coming into the city to schools and their participation in the advantages offered by a large school program eventually will lead to improved employment opportunities and better acceptance by non-Indian neighbors. More and more of the children are learning to take part as citizens in communities, and are acclimating themselves to a better way of life. She feels, and so does the Appleton League of Women Voters, that the children will provide the hope for the future.