

to see the results of this poisoning in the great numbers of dead fish floating down stream. So I repeat, the State of New York should be engaged in the business of conserving the lives of human beings rather than persecuting them for the few fish they take to sustain their lives.

Jemison's program was clearly spelled out throughout the 1930s: (1) Remove Commissioner Collier; (2) Repeal the Indian Reorganization Act; and (3) Abolish the BIA. The appointment of John Collier as Indian Commissioner, an avowed reformer committed to reorganization, prompted Jemison's war against the BIA. Out of this move came the founding of the American Indian Federation by a widely-diverse, ideologically motivated group of geographically separate native American intellectuals who had Montezuma's program as its inspiration.<sup>51</sup> Commissioner Collier and Secretary Ickes felt the wrath of Jemison's jibes throughout the New Deal. She accused Collier of heavy-handed and insensitive conservation measures in the herd reduction program among the Navajo;<sup>52</sup> of threatening Indians who signed petitions against Collier or the IRA with a loss of jobs and rations;<sup>53</sup> of wasteful spending of congressional appropriations for Indian affairs;<sup>54</sup> and of general overall administrative incompetence.<sup>55</sup> It is clear from a reading of the major legislative hearings of the 1930s that she had an influence on leading congressional critics of the BIA in the period; most notably Congressman Alfred Beiter of New York, Virginia Jenkes of Virginia, Usher D. Burdick of North Dakota, John S. McGroarty of California, Senator Burton K. Wheeler, and Special Counsel to the Senate Indian Affairs Subcommittee Albert A. Grorud. They sponsored legislation to limit or repeal the Indian Reorganization Act and/or to incorporate the American Indian Federation, made speeches opposing Collier's programs, or badgered the commissioner with their intense questioning before congressional committees.<sup>56</sup>

Besides her commitment to the Senecas, Jemison's defense of other Indian nations can be seen throughout the period of the New Deal. She was an active defender of the rights of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and worked with her lifelong friend, Cherokee Vice-Chief Fred Bauer, to prevent the Interior Department from splitting their Qualla boundary reservation in two. Secretary Ickes had acceded to the Park Service's and other political pressures to build the Blue Ridge Parkway through the reservation in order to promote tourism in the nearby newly-opened Great Smoky National Park. Without Bauer's and Jemison's work in organizing Indian and non-Indian resistance, much more Indian land would have been taken. Instead of

dividing the reservation, a "compromise" was eventually worked out, whereby the parkway, although taking some Cherokee land, today starts the northern boundary of the reservation.<sup>57</sup>

Jemison also devoted much of her time in this period to the problems of South Dakota and California Indians. Together with large numbers of Sioux she questioned the legality of the Indian Reorganization Act referendum and suggested there was voter manipulation and fraud by the government.<sup>58</sup> Jemison's defense of California Indian communities also centered around attempts to win recognition of eighteen treaties made by these Indians with the federal government, but never formally ratified by Congress; to gain reparations benefits for the survivors of the heinous treatment accorded to these Indians during and after the Gold Rush years; and to limit both the BIA's and the State of California's jurisdiction over these Indians.<sup>59</sup>

In all cases, she attempted to win a hearing before Congress for varied Indian interests. It is important to note, that in spite of whatever negative things have been written about her organization, the American Indian Federation, it did provide an open forum for diverse Indian opinion on Capitol Hill by bringing native Americans to testify about their needs, as well as their objections to policies.<sup>60</sup> Although there were many assimilationist-minded people in the organization, it was one of the earlier national lobbying efforts that tried to influence policy and recognized the many differences in native American civilizations. The American Indian Federation saw that blanket uniform policies carried out from Washington often did more harm than good. In a letter-to-the-editor of the *Washington Times* in 1935, Jemison maintained: "There never has been and never will be but one method to deal with the Indian problem which has been created by the Indian Bureau."<sup>61</sup> Jemison put it best in a speech to the Black Hills Indian Treaty Council at Kyle, South Dakota, on July 27, 1938:<sup>62</sup>

The Wheeler-Howard Act provides only one form of government for the Indian and that is communal or cooperative form of living. John Collier said he was going to give the Indian self-government. If he was going to give us self-government he would let us set up a form of government we wanted to live under. He would give us the right to continue to live under our old tribal customs if we wanted to.

Collier's romantic notion that all Indians should live in the manner of the Northern Pueblos, whom he viewed as "pristine primitives," blinded him to the real world of North American Indians.<sup>63</sup> He could not see nor appreciate that many Sioux who lived on their