

Urban Indian Is Forgotten Man

By Jack Anderson

The urban Indian, who fled the dry-dirt poverty of the reservation to seek his fortune in the city, has become America's forgotten man.

Most often, he gave up a hard life on the open range for a harder life of cold cement and tarpaper shacks, of joblessness and alcoholism, of tuberculosis and early death.

The grim story is told in the Broken Treaties Papers, which irate Indians looted from government files and turned over to us.

No one really knows how many urban Indians are in desperate need. Estimates run as high as 300,000—that's a third of the Indians in the U.S.—or there may be less than 100,000.

The stolen papers show that former Indian Commissioner Robert Bennett became appalled at what he learned about the plight of the city Indians and asked his staff in August, 1968, to prepare a report for him.

An exhaustive document, labeled "Study of Urban Indian Problems," was delivered to Bennett on Dec. 31, 1968, in the dying days of the Johnson administration.

"An Indian does not cease being an Indian simply by moving from the reservation . . ." the study declared. "The Indian mini-minority, alone among the many urban ethnic groups, lacks an effective

voice and commands no advocate for its interest."

Nixon Says No

The study charged that the Bureau of Indian Affairs had neglected the forlorn Indians in the cities and recommended that it "enlarge its role in the urban environment."

The study was circulated to BIA offices throughout the country for their comments. "All replies," according to a confidential summary, "rendered favorable comment."

Slowly, the bureaucratic wheels were set in motion to implement the study. In August, 1969, new Indian Commissioner Louis Bruce promised that the BIA would act as "advocate" for the urban Indians.

But President Nixon had other intentions. A year later, he said that the "BIA's responsibility does not extend to Indians who have left the reservation." However, he was ambiguous about the details.

His instructions were clarified to the BIA by aide Frank Carlucci who wrote in a memo that the President "envisages no extension of BIA services to Indians who have left the reservation . . . It appears controlling that Indian needs on reservation are sufficiently great that resources available to BIA should not be dissipated elsewhere."

The White House orders

were enforced by Assistant Interior Secretary Harrison Loesch, who decreed in an internal communication that the bureau's services are to be provided only to "the reservation Indian population."

Several weeks later, after the urban Indian study had been discarded and its recommendations killed by the White House, Sen. James Buckley (Cons.-R-N.Y.) and Rep. Melvin Esch (R-Mich.) heard about the study and asked Interior Secretary Rogers Morton about it.

Morton knew the study was dead, but he hedged in his letter to the congressmen. The study's "various aspects," he wrote, "will have to be thoroughly considered."

Washington Whirl

MUSICAL CHAIRS — Our White House sources say the real purpose of President Nixon's reorganization is to tighten his control over the government. It has appeared to be a game of musical chairs as he has shifted his subordinates around. But he has carefully chosen loyal aides, with proven managerial ability, to take over agencies that haven't been as responsive to his will as he would like. He not only has tightened but centralized the lines of authority. Those squeezed out have been, largely, subordinates

who couldn't be depended upon to do and say precisely what the President wished. Richard Helms was dropped as CIA chief, for example, because he had refused to slant his secret testimony on Capitol Hill. At Senate Foreign Relations hearings, he would not confirm the Nixon administration's estimates of Soviet first-strike capability.

CHRISTMAS BAUBLES — Our Oct. 10 column, citing the tax breaks that the special interests hoped to sneak through Congress during the end-of-session logjam, alerted Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) He stayed on the Senate floor during the closing days and, one by one, shot the baubles off the Christmas tree as the special-interest senators tried to string them up. On the House side, his two Wisconsin colleagues, Les Aspin and Henry Reuss, and California Democrat Phil Burton helped to shoot down the special-interest amendments. One amendment, which was supposed to aid museums and libraries, got past Proxmire. He accepted it on the word of its sponsor, Sen. Frank Church, (D-Idaho). But unknown to Church, the language would have permitted a multi-million-dollar tax break for the drug industry. It was stopped in the House, and Church will reintroduce it next session without the drug benefits.