

SKELETON CREW MANS DC BIA

Massive Slow-Down of Programs May Develop Over Lack of Records

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The last of the great Indian uprisings did not end with the turn of the century. Battle-weary bureaucrats are surveying damages to the paper-littered battleground of the Bureau of Indian Affairs offices in Washington, D.C.

Casualties are not yet fully counted but observers on

the scene predict a massive slow-down of many BIA programs which depend on the mountain of paper and files for their existence. At the last report, litter within the building was two to three inches deep.

Estimating that 7000 cubic feet of records were destroyed, the Bureau assigned the value at \$100 a cubic foot for a total damage of \$700,000.

Damage to the structure itself is estimated at \$250,000; to the furnishings and equipment at \$280,000; and to art objects and artifacts at \$750,000.

In addition, occupation of the building by the Trail of the Broken Treaties Caravan cost the government some \$297,000 in employees' wages. During the seizure of the offices, the work of the Bureau ground to a halt.

This week a skeleton crew of about 75 persons began the slow work of reconstruction of the organization, working for the most part in "borrowed" offices.

As of Monday, all but 10 or

15 of the Broken Treaties Caravan have left the city of Washington. Three official spokesmen have remained behind to continue discussions with government officials.

The three are: Anita Collins, a Shoshone Indian; Hank Adams, Sioux; and Herb Powless from Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The three Caravan representatives have been meeting with top members of a new group created by the White House, the White House Inter-Agency Task Force on Indian Affairs: Leonard Garment, assistant to the President on Minorities; Frank Carlucci, Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget; Bradley Patterson, Jr.; and representatives from 16 departments of the federal government.

A Department of the Interior official said that most negotiations with the Broken Treaties Caravan have been conducted by the White House directly, rather than by his organization.

Last Monday, the Caravan presented a 20 point position paper to negotiators, outlining their goals and demands. The new agency intends to have an official response to that paper by Jan. 8, 1973.

Following that official White response on Jan. 8, Senator Edward Kennedy will call a Congressional hearing to examine and assess both Congressional and government systems as to

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INDIANS OCCUPY BIA BUILDING — On November 2, Indian people of the "Trail of Broken Treaties Caravan" moved into the Washington, D.C. Bureau of Indian Affairs office building. They did so because they were unable to find

places to stay and eat. Subsequently, extensive destruction of the building ensued. Among the destroyed were 7,000 cubic feet of records.

— Courtesy of Fairbanks Daily News Miner.

Skeleton BIA Crew . . .

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how they will continue from this point on.

Senator Kennedy, commenting on the deluge of letters and telegrams arriving in the Capitol both for and against the Caravan actions, said that the number of letters by non-Indians generally expressed the desire that something be done for the Indian people.

The severest criticism of destruction to the building wrought by the Caravan came from responsible Indian leadership throughout the country.

The National Congress of American Indians deplored damages and destruction but expressed a sense of kinship and brotherhood for many goals and objectives of the Caravan, some of which NCAI has been fighting for 29 years.

This is the length of time NCAI has been in existence. It is the oldest and largest Indian organization in America.

A newer group called National Tribal Chairman's Association came down much harder on Caravan leaders. They asked for the immediate arrest and prosecution of leaders and the firing of all officials within the BIA who failed to adequately defend the building from take-over and destruction.

This would presumably include Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Louis Bruce, who pledged his early support to the Caravan of Broken Treaties, remaining in the building with them the first night, only to be called out at a later time by Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton.

Problems began to erupt soon after the Caravan arrived in Washington, D. C., some 1000 strong around Halloween. A seven-day schedule of events had been planned but soon after their arrival a serious housing crisis arose.

Initially housing had been provided by a black church, but it was found to be infested by rats.

Several of the older people

with the Caravan expressed concern about the babies and young children being threatened by the rats. About 35 to 40 elderly people from various tribes made the trip to Washington.

On Thursday, Nov. 2, several members of the Caravan went to the BIA to ask help in seeking new housing. They met with officials with poor response. Ultimately, three young Indian men got into a fight with security men at the back of the building.

When asked how they had gotten control of the building, one young Indian said simply: "We took it." Once inside, they barricaded the building and remained inside until the day of the presidential election.

Leaders said they would defend the building with their lives. Lack of response from federal officials to their 20 point position paper caused a general air of skepticism as to government promises.

As talks continued to stall and with hopes for adequate housing vanishing, the people felt they had been stranded.

Indians throughout the country may not agree on the actions undertaken by the Trail of the Broken Treaties Caravan, but those actions, nonetheless, have focused the national spotlight on the plight of America's aboriginal people and on the breakdown in communication between those people and the government agency which has historically attempted to deal with their needs.

The Chinese speak of fighting a Paper Tiger. The Indian wars may be officially ended, but the Paper War continues. This week janitors and clerks push long-handled brooms down the echoing corridors of the Bureau of Indian Affairs building in Washington, D.C.

It remains to be seen what will be swept under the rug and which hundred-year-old misunderstandings will be taken out, shaken thoroughly, and aired in the unplanned fall housecleaning.