

In U.S. House—

Bill Aims to Give Alcatraz to Indians

A bill aimed at transferring ownership of Alcatraz Island from the federal government to the American Indian Community, has been introduced in the House of Representatives.

The island was invaded last year by 300 San Francisco Bay area American Indians who claimed it as their own on the basis of prior discovery by the Indians.

Famous as the site of a maximum security prison, the island has been abandoned by the government in favor of the San Quentin Prison.

Sponsored by Rep. Brown of

California and 10 of his colleagues, the joint House resolution directs the President to initiate immediate negotiations with representatives of the American Indian community with the objective of transferring unencumbered title in fee of Alcatraz Island to them.

"For too long," Rep. Brown said, "the relationship between our Government and the Indian people has been distressingly dismal. Alcatraz can be a significant turning point in that relationship," he continued, "and I pray that President Nixon will begin these important negotiations as soon as possible."

Brown said that Rep. Ogden Reid of New York and he decided to introduce the legislation after meeting with some of the Indians from Alcatraz in December.

To American Indian people, he said, Alcatraz represents a real breakout, an escape by the Indian people from a series of private and public binds imposed by our society.

He termed the occupation of Alcatraz as a harmless, yet effective, method of bringing to the attention of the American people the fact that they have neglected the cultural needs of today's Indians.

To date, the California representative continued, government Indian policies have "failed miserably." They have been patronizing, thus alienating the Indian people and destroying their rich culture.

The U.S. is spending more than ever on various Indian programs and yet "the Indian people consistently rank as the poorest, most illiterate, short-lived and distant members of our society."

"Therefore, Alcatraz is critically important. It is a move by the Indian people themselves. Unfortunately—and tragically—the Government has failed them. Now, Indians have decided to peacefully take destiny into their own hands."

The island, he continued, is barren, crumbling and seemingly unwanted by the Government.

Yet the Indians, he explained, have created a living community there and have talked of using the facilities on the island for a cultural center and educational complex.