

June 14 Issue—

News Week Scrutinizes Indian Relocation Program

The Indian Relocation program of the Bureau of Indian Affairs is given careful scrutiny in the June 14 issue of Newsweek.

"Compared with other minority groups caught in the grind of urban poverty, the plight of the citified American Indian represents a new dimension in wretchedness," the magazine reports. "Though the statistics compiled by different studies vary somewhat, the Indian probably has a median family income of less than \$4,000 and a high-school drop out rate of about 50%. He has found city life even more disastrous than have blacks, Puerto Ricans or chicanos. His over-all suicide and murder rates are the highest in the country, while his

life expectancy is the lowest. Alcoholism is a problem for 25% of the adult males. The Indian is five times more likely to have pneumonia or tuberculosis than the average American, and his diet is so poor that his death rate from dysentery is 35 times the national norm.

"As for employment, few Indians have skills to compete for good jobs. In the Uptown section of Chicago—a sort of Ellis Island for Indians of the South and the Mideast—only 30% of the new arrivals achieve anything approaching a normal life.

" 'Right now,' says George Woodward, director of Bay Area Native American Council of San Francisco, we're at the bottom of the ditch. And unless we get

ourselves out, we'll end up with nothing but artifacts."

"What makes the Indians particularly bitter is the fact that unlike other minorities, many of them did not come to the cities of their own free will, but as the direct result of official government policy. Instead of financing economic development where they were, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs spend decades prying them loose from cultural isolation and handing out one-way tickets to the cities along with large promises of a better life to come."

Newsweek goes into detail on the dire consequences, including a story of an Indian who asked street directions in Navajo to be arrested and classified as

an insane Mexican-American. It was only after several days the mistake was discovered, the magazine reports.

But the article ends on an optimistic note.

"Fortunately for many Indians, Washington in recent months has exhibited a decided change of heart. With flurry of memos, the BIA has exchanged its policy of relocation for one of economic development on the reservations themselves."