

TESTIMONY BY CONGRESSMAN LES AUCCOIN  
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR  
AND INSULAR AFFAIRS  
OCTOBER 18, 1985

MR. CHAIRMAN, MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE - THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY IN SUPPORT OF A BILL I'VE INTRODUCED TO RESTORE FEDERAL RECOGNITION TO THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE GRAND RONDE IN MY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT - OREGON'S FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT.

RECOGNIZING THE TIME CONSTRAINTS YOUR COMMITTEE IS UNDER, I INTEND TO BE BRIEF AND TO THE POINT. OTHERS WHO WILL FOLLOW ME WILL GIVE PERSONAL TESTIMONY AS TO THE CRUCIAL NEED FOR RESTORATION.

THE MAIN THING I WANT TO STRESS THIS MORNING IS MY COMPLETE SUPPORT FOR THIS LEGISLATION AND WHAT IT SEEKS TO DO - AND THAT IS TO GIVE THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF GRAND RONDE IN POLK COUNTY, OREGON, THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO HELP THEMSELVES. THOSE TOOLS INCLUDE HEALTH, VOCATIONAL, AND EDUCATION BENEFITS, AND JUST AS IMPORTANT, THEY ALSO INCLUDE RESTORATION OF TRIBAL RECOGNITION. I'M CONVINCED THAT TRIBAL STATUS IS CRUCIAL TO NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND IS A CORNERSTONE FOR THEIR COLLECTIVE SUCCESS. TO NON-INDIANS, TRIBAL STATUS MAY SEEM SUPERFLUOUS, UNNECESSARY, OR PERHAPS EVEN SILLY. BUT, TO INDIAN PEOPLES, IT IS THE VESSEL FOR THEIR CULTURAL REDISCOVERY, AND A SOURCE OF THEIR CULTURAL IDENTITY.

THIS BILL IS STRAIGHTFORWARD AND SINGULAR IN ITS PURPOSE. IT ENABLES THE GRAND ROUNDES TO QUALIFY FOR HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED BY THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES.

IT DOES NOT CREATE A RESERVATION NOR DOES IT GRANT SPECIAL HUNTING AND FISHING RIGHTS.

MY EXPERIENCE IN SPONSORING SIMILAR LEGISLATION IN 1977 FOR THE SILETZ INDIANS OF LINCOLN COUNTY, OREGON, SHOWED ME THAT RESTORATION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RESERVATION ARE TWO, SEPARATE, DISTINCT ISSUES.

THIS BILL AUTHORIZES THE SECRETARY OF INTERIOR AND THE TRIBE TO DEVELOP A PLAN, WITHIN TWO YEARS AFTER THE BILL'S ENACTMENT, FOR A RESERVATION TO SERVE AS THE TRIBE'S ECONOMIC LAND BASE. APPROVAL OF THE RESERVATION WILL REQUIRE ANOTHER ACT OF CONGRESS.

LET ME ALSO BE EXTREMELY CLEAR THAT THIS LEGISLATION DOES NOT GRANT ANY HUNTING OR FISHING RIGHTS. IT IS NEUTRAL ON THIS ISSUE.

I'M SUBMITTING FOR THE RECORD THREE LETTERS WHICH WILL SHOW THE COMMITTEE THAT THAT THERE ISN'T ANY DOUBT IN ANYBODY'S MIND REGARDING THIS QUESTION OF HUNTING AND FISHING RIGHTS.

KATHRYN HARRISON, VICE-CHAIRPERSON OF THE TRIBAL COUNCIL, NOTED IN HER LETTER TO ME ON AUGUST 12, 1985 THAT THE BILL ONLY HAS TWO GOALS: TO MAKE THE TRIBES ELIGIBLE AGAIN FOR BENEFITS AND TO ENABLE

THEM TO REGAIN THEIR SENSE OF TRIBAL IDENTITY. SHE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT SECTION 4(D) IS VERY CLEAR ON THE POINT THAT NO NEW HUNTING OR FISHING RIGHTS WILL BE GRANTED BY THIS LEGISLATION.

OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL DAVE FROHNMAYER WROTE ME ON JULY 1, 1985 THAT "ENACTMENT ... WOULD HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE CURRENT RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS WITH RESPECT TO GRAND RONDE HUNTING AND FISHING PRACTICES".

THIS LEGISLATION ALSO IS SUPPORTED BY THE SALEM (OREGON) CHAPTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF NORTHWEST STEELHEADERS. LEE PETERSON, PRESIDENT, AND JOHN NESBITT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS INDICATED THEIR SUPPORT IN A LETTER TO THE TRIBE ON APRIL 8, 1985.

THE ASSOCIATION OF NORTHWEST STEELHEADERS HAVE NOT EXPRESSED ANY OPPOSITION EITHER.

FINALLY, LET ME CONCLUDE BY URGING YOU TO CONSIDER THE EXAMPLE OF THE GRAND RONDOS - A GROUP OF TRIBES THAT FOUND THEMSELVES MANIPULATED, LIKE THE SILETZ AND MANY OTHERS INTO TERMINATION. THE RESULT: THE GRAND RONDOS ARE MUCH WORSE OFF THEN BEFORE. UNEMPLOYMENT HAS REACHED AS HIGH AS 58 PERCENT. THE PER CAPITA INCOME IS \$3,440. SIXTY-EIGHT PERCENT OF GRAND RONDE FAMILIES LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL. ONLY ONE PERCENT OF ALL TRIBAL MEMBERS HAS EARNED A COLLEGE DEGREE.

BUT EVEN THOUGH THE TRIBE WAS ILL-PREPARED FOR THE REALITIES OF TERMINATION AND MANY INDIANS FLOUNDERED AS UNEMPLOYMENT SOARED, THE

GRAND RONDDES MAINTAINED AN IDENTITY, A SENSE OF COMMUNITY THAT PERSISTS TODAY. IT IS A STRONG BOND WHICH MAY NEVER BE BROKEN.

THANKS TO FAR-SIGHTED LEADERS SUCH AS KATHRYN HARRISON, THE GRAND RONDDES BEGAN TO REGROUP AND SEEK RESTORATION. SINCE FORMING A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION IN 1975, THEY HAVE UNDERTAKEN SEVERAL PROGRAMS TO TACKLE THEIR PROBLEMS AND GET BACK ON THEIR FEET. THIS EFFORT HAS WON THE ADMIRATION OF NUMEROUS CITY, COUNTY AND STATE OFFICIALS, CHURCH GROUPS AND BUSINESS AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS WHICH SUPPORT THIS LEGISLATION.

THESE INDIAN PEOPLE ARE READY NOW TO ACCEPT RESTORATION OF THEIR TRIBE AS A FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED ENTITY. THEY ARE NOT ASKING FOR A HAND-OUT. THEY ARE DETERMINED PEOPLE WHO HAVE EARNED THE DIGNITY OF BEING CALLED BY THIS NATION A TRIBE ONCE MORE.