

WHAT NEXT???

The recent action by Gov. Jim Martin was surprising and very distressing to say the least. In the past we have seen Republican administrations which have become more sensitive to Indian issues and we had foreseen the possible growth of a real two party system, especially here in Robeson County. Although voter registration is overwhelmingly Democratic, many people are increasingly willing to cross over and vote for the best man or woman even if they happen to be Republican.

But Jim Martin's recent action, of removing Mr. Lonnie Revels as chairman of the N.C. Commission of Indian Affairs, can do nothing to foster further trust or goodwill. It might be hard to support someone like Lt. Gov. Jim Gardner on a good day, but with the actions and blunders of the Martin administration, Gardner's chances among Indian voters looks even worse as we move toward '92. Again it appears some individuals have decided Indians need the guidance of a "great white father" rather than permit tribal self-determination.

We find it very curious Gov. Martin would remove Mr. Revels as chairman of the N.C. Commission of Indian Affairs. The commission was created to encourage and foster the fair and effective treatment of Indians and the issues impacting them. It would seem the commission's board would have been permitted to select its own chairperson. But apparently Mr. Martin does not trust Indians and has a problem with allowing Indians to choose their own leaders. But the problems extend even deeper.

Gov. Martin did nothing to assist Lumbees in their effort to seek federal recognition. He did not write in support of this effort; he did not testify or speak publicly on behalf of the Lumbee bill. Gov. Jim Martin did nothing! But, when the future of the Indian Cultural Center was threatened by a golf course, Jim Martin jumped right in the fray and he was again, in our opinion, on the wrong side of the issue. Apparently he had a problem with Mr. Revels' strong support of the cultural center. There was a considerable amount of maneuvering behind the scenes as some individuals sought to develop the golf course and it appears Martin supported this effort at the expense of the cultural center. It was rumored Rep. DeVane had even lined up some investors who were interested in purchasing the land for development. So when Mr. Revels publicly supported the cultural center, Martin seemed to view this as disloyalty to the administration. And in the past Mr. Revels was apparently on the wrong side of another issue when he supported the appointment of Dexter Brooks to the newly created judgeship in Robeson County. Martin was heavily lobbied, by Joe Freeman Britt, to appoint Henry Ward Oxendine to the position and again Mr. Revels' public statements were viewed as being disloyal to the Martin administration.

And that is where the governor is way off base. Mr. Revels had the duty and responsibility to repre-

sent the best interests of Indian people and not blindly follow the Martin administration's blundering. Did Gov. Martin really desire a front-man, a puppet who would speak only when it was supplied with "official words"? Is dependence to be dream and destiny of Indian people in North Carolina under tutelage and control of Gov. Jim Martin? Does he see himself as our new "great white father"? Perhaps we really do understand why Mr. Revels was fired.

Gas prices have risen in Robeson County as they have throughout our nation. Sen. Terry Sanford is one among many lawmakers asking for an investigation of the recent gas price increases.

It seems inconceivable to us that such price increases can be legitimate since the gasoline now being used has long since been bought. But this is typical of some companies who put profit above all else. Have you ever wondered why most oil companies chose to raise the price of gasoline by the same amount? Do you reckon they are talking with each other?

We see the same happening almost everyday in some of our local grocery stores. Have you ever walked into the store and picked up an item only to see three or four different prices on that item? These stores are obviously following the lead of the bigger companies and seem not to hesitate to take advantage of the consumer. You know that the store's first price was based on the cost of that item and the first price insured the store a fair profit. Now what do you think that store is doing when it raises its price two or three times on something that was bought and paid for weeks if not months ago? Many apparently are not satisfied with a "fair" profit!

In our opinion these actions are plain and simple "price gouging" and there can be no justification for such practices in our country. While many people call for less and less governmental regulation and control, perhaps they should take a good long hard look at the current practices of some oil companies and grocery store chains. If we cannot depend on a company to be fair, then perhaps we can get that company's attention by going elsewhere to make our purchases. Only when consumers refuse to roll over and take it, only then will things change. So let your congressmen, senators, and local representatives know how you feel and demand action. After all, election time is just around the corner so now is the perfect time to see who your representatives really represent!

We warned you several months ago...and now school systems have begun to either boast or make

excuses about the recent results of the California Achievement Test.

It was recently reported that the Moore County system "dramatically" improved its CAT scores while the Scotland County system's students scored well below other students in the region. And while school systems compare scores and brag or make excuses, the education of our children continues to suffer.

Several school systems are seeking federal funds to create special programs for students which will "intervene" at an earlier age in the hope of "improving test skills." This is dead wrong! We need to improve reading, math, and writing skills and the "testing skills" will naturally follow.

In our opinion, the school systems were sold a bill of goods when they implemented such tests as the California Achievement Test because administrations naturally began to demand that teachers teach items related to the items which appear on the CAT. And so teachers had to follow administration directives and devote valuable time and energy to preparing for these tests rather than educating our children. We have faith in our teacher's abilities and with the freedom and resources, coupled with the support and backing of the community and parents, teachers will get the job done. In our view there are too many "specialists" and not enough teachers who have the sole responsibility to teach our children.

The CAT is not worthy of the financial costs or the long term educational costs we currently pay. The results are not systematically or effectively used to create or provide approaches to meet the deficiencies of our children and so we feel the time, effort, and money spent on such tests would better be used if applied directly to activities which promote and support teachers and "teaching."

Robesonians certainly got a shock when the tax bills arrived. The surcharge for the landfill was not only exorbitant but we feel it has also been misapplied in many cases.

We do not believe the county can truly manage its own waste given the current level of expertise. Politics still seem to dominate many county activities as we have witnessed in the past. There has

been confusion and controversy surrounding the Robeson County Water Department. Many Robesonians feel this department is at best, inefficient and ineffective. Several individuals have asked for an investigation but nothing has happened.

And now with the creation of a super-budget waste program, many fear our hard earned tax dollars are again going to be flushed down the drain with little of substance to show for the expenditures.

Robesonians deserve a full and complete explanation and justification for such charges for waste disposal. Call your county commissioner and ask for a written explanation. We would be interested in the response you receive.

Mobil Oil Corp., which still desires to drill exploratory gas wells 45 miles of the coast of Cape Hatteras, might be in for a shock.

A recent bill with a provision to ban drilling off the coast of the Outer Banks for one year, has been forwarded to President Bush for his signature. The U.S. House passed the bill by a vote of 360 to 0 and the U.S. Senate voted 99-0 in favor of the bill.

Now we await President Bush's signature and then, at least for a year, we can forget Mobile Oil!

Some employers apparently feel they are the saviors of our region. Recently President Marvin Johnson of the House of Raeford (a turkey processing plant in Raeford, N.C.) stated he would continue operating the plant and keep the paychecks coming if the city would forget and forgive the plant's past violations of environmental laws. Mr. Johnson also refused to pay the \$70,000 in fines the company had been assessed and stated he would not post the \$100,000 bond the city was requiring.

All realize the importance of jobs to our region, but we support the city of Raeford's past actions and encourage them to stand firm. Regardless of the money a company brings into our region, we must never give in to blackmail. We must never sell the health and well-being of our children's environment to the almighty dollar. If companies cannot operate responsibly then we should forcefully tell them to close up and move on—they should not be given the opportunity to make such threats.

BY DR. STAN KNICK, DIRECTOR OF THE PSU NATIVE AMERICAN RESOURCE CTR.

ALONG THE ROBESON TRAIL

Archaeological studies tell us that humans first entered North America by crossing the Bering Land Bridge from Asia into Alaska. This happened at least 20,000 years ago, though some researchers believe it happened 75,000 or more years ago. These migrations brought hunters into the Americas to become the first Paleo-Indians, and ancestors of the living Native Americans of today. At least that's the story according to science.

But all traditional Native American cultures, from Alaska to the tip of South America, had (or still have) their own story of their origin. These myths and legends are the cultural traditions passed down by many generations of Native Americans as part of their oral history.

One such story of origins comes from Luther Standing Bear, of the Lakota (more commonly known as Sioux) Nation, who recorded it in 1933: "Our legends tell us that it was hundreds and perhaps thousands of years ago since the first man sprang from the soil in the midst of the great plains. The story says that one morning long ago a lone man awoke, face to the sun, emerging from the soil. Only his head was visible, the rest of his body not yet being fashioned. The man looked about, but saw no mountains, no rivers, no forests. There was nothing but soft and quaking mud, for the earth itself was still young. Up and up the man drew himself, until he freed his body from the clinging soil. At last he stood upon the earth, but it was not solid, and his first few steps were slow and halting. But the sun shone, and ever the man kept his face turned toward it. In time the rays of the sun hardened the face of the earth and strengthened the man and he bounded and leaped about, a free and joyous creature. From this man sprang the Lakota Nation and, so far as we know, our people have been born and have died upon this plain; and no people have shared it with us until the coming of the European. So this land of great plains is claimed by the Lakotas as their very own. We are of the soil and the soil is of us."

This legend, like other Native American legends about the origin of the tribe, shows us many things. The fact that there are so many origin legends, and that most are different from the next, shows us that they have been distinct cultures for a great many generations.

So many origin legends also show us that it is indeed human nature to try to explain things. It seems to be especially important to human culture to explain where "we" came from; how "we" got here; and what makes "us" different from "them." This is often a vital part of the way "we" establish "our" identity.

This tendency to explain things comes from the basic human desire to classify things, to make things around us knowable in terms we can understand. One of the first things a normal baby in any culture tries to do is to sort out what can be eaten from what can not; the easiest way is by experiment--by putting it up to the mouth to test how it is. Later on, children ask "what is this; what is that," and sometimes all too often "f3 is that?" But all human cultures want to have a widely acceptable story about their origin. If one story becomes unacceptable for some reason, another takes its place. And often, when different cultures come into contact, as when Europeans came to the Americas, after a time folks end up adopting the origin story from some other, formerly distant, culture.

The practice of European colonial governments in the Americas has been to take advantage of "origins." At first, they tried to make use of, or get rid of, Native Americans because they were of different "origins." Then, they tried every conceivable way to get Native Americans to forget about their "origins" and fit into mainstream society. And now, in one of the greatest ironies ever, agencies like the Bureau of Indian Affairs insist that in order for Indian tribes to be federally recognized they must be able to document their "origins." So "origins" are important in many ways.

But the Siouan origin legend quoted above also shows us the close relationship between traditional cultures and the land on which they lived. The people are said to have come literally from the land itself: "We are of the soil and the soil is of us."

There is an interesting comparison between this Siouan legend and the Christian story of origin, in which the first human was also made from the soil (clay). This suggests yet another possible lesson from the study of legends and cultural traditions--that no matter how different they may seem on the surface, there are usually similarities in there somewhere.

Each person has to decide, on the basis of available information, what the real story of Native American origin is. Some earlier Europeans believed that Native Americans must be the descendants of the "Lost Tribe of Israel." After examining all the evidence, you decide.

For more information, call or visit the Native American Resource Center in Old Main Building, on the campus of Pembroke State University.

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