

The Way I See It

by Dr. Dean Chavers, President
Native American Scholarship Fund
Albuquerque, NM



Knowing Who Your Friends Are

In the circuitous, labyrinthine world of Indian politics, it is hard to know who is a friend and who is not. If you have been through a few battles with a person, and that person has not turned on you, maybe you have found a friend.

Unfortunately, being paternalized for two centuries has turned too many "Indian leaders" into puppets of the governor, mayor, or school superintendent who hired them. Bruce Jones, Executive Director of the NC Indian Commission, has been heard to say many times, "No Indian pays my salary."

Bruce knows who pays his salary. It is the Governor. He is accountable to the Governor, and not to Indian people anywhere. Truthfully, Bruce says this only in the heat of passion or battle. In public, he is a friend of Indians.

Twenty years ago, I met one of the supposed dearest friends Lumbee Indians ever had, Eddie Tullis. Eddie has been Chief of the Eastern Creeks for over 25 years, and has never lost an election. He "inherited" his position by marrying the daughter of the last chief, Mary Jane.

I have known Mary Jane since I made a recruiting trip to Poarch, Alabama for Bacone College in 1979. She understands politics and power.

Getting federal recognition for the Eastern Creeks was only a dull gleam in Eddie's eye when I first met him. Nothing had been done to apply. Nothing had been done to document their tribal existence.

For years, Eddie was a fan of Lumbee Leaders. Dr. Helen Scheirbeck, W.J. Strickland, Ken Maynor, and Judge Brantley Blue taught him a lot. When the procedure for federal recognition was established in 1987, and the Lumbee leaders started working toward it, Eddie jumped in with both feet with his tribe's petition.

As a result, the Eastern Creeks were formally recognized half a dozen years ago by the BIA. They have built a successful bingo operation, a motel, and other businesses, with federal funds used to start them.

Thus it saddens my heart to see the letter opposing Lumbee recognition that Eddie just co-signed. It was printed in Indian Country Today, the other Indian paper I read every week. Since Eddie was gotten federal recognition, he no longer needs Lumbees any more. We have known this since the year he got recognition.

The year before, Rosa Winfree and I had gone to Eddie with a proposition that one of his people run with the two of us for the Board of the NIEA. We had the support of Ruth Woods, and had several other blocs of support.

With a fourth person, Pauline Smith, we ran as a slate and all four of us won. We ran on a reform slate. We thought and stated that the leadership of NIEA had let the organization fall apart; it needed to be built up. Unfortunately, within six months, both Eddie's man, Eugene Madison, and Pauline, had both turned on us and joined the opposition, the ones who had already failed.

With their help, Karen Fenton beat me for the Presidency, 8-7, and proceeded to almost bankrupt the organization. She made 23 trips on NIEA funds that year, and overspent the \$15,000 travel budget by more than 100%.

Eugene would not have abandoned us without authorization from Eddie. As soon as Eddie's tribe was recognized, he jumped the Lumbee ship and went to the other side himself. He showed signs of this even earlier, supporting Arnold Wachacha from Cherokee for the NCAI Eastern Area VP over Bruce Jones, in 1983. Eddie went along with the thinking that it was "too early" to have a Lum on the NCAI Board.

Maybe I expect too much. Can we expect Eddie Tullis to be our friend when our own, Bruce Jones, will not be? Politics makes strange bedfellows. But does it mean that our own have to sell us out?

Genealogical Glimpses

by Elissa Locklear



Lonely Mother

The old Lady pulled the string that raised the latch and listened as the door groaned on its hinges. A similar sound could be felt in her spirit as she stared into the night. Her frail wrinkled hands tugged at the coarse homespun apron that was tied so neatly about her waist. Her mouth jerked several times as her eyes flooded with tears. How she wished that he would come by tonight. It had been too long since she had seen her son. "Wonder why he didn't get up with me she thought, always was stubborn, wanted his own way." "Couldn't figure the boy, fear such hard trials in the settlement lately. Our boys are leaving this world, never thought I'd see so many of mine go ahead of me." Silently she dabbed her eyes with the tail of her apron. The great burden that she carried was not without cause. Since the war had begun her family had fallen prey to it like no other family. She never could figure why the white wanted to start a war with each other. Her people had warred with other tribes but never with their own. Now she had almost given her entire family and she hadn't even chosen a side. Maybe she had. Secretly in her heart she knew that her boys understood how that the trouble had come to them. They know about greed, though they had not been taught

to practice it. When they saw the white planters scrambling for every acre of land that they could get control of, and still they showed no signs of being satisfied, the small landholder began to shudder.

The Indian farmers saw places like the Baker plantation, the Southerland farm, Red Banks plantation as a threat to them, and especially for a need of labor. The elderly mother of Henry and Steve struggled to understand why she should have to give up so much, when she had so little to start with. She nor Allen had ever voted. Allen's grandfather James had voted, and maybe her father-in-law William, Fanny's son. The only rights she knew anything of was when she went to one of the planters on her side of the creek for a pass, permitting her to go visit her relatives a quarter mile away, "some night," she thought. Anger and fear were frequent visitors in her heart lately and it was hard for her to tell which of the two was with her the most. She knew that her heart would always be at war with the people who killed her family, thought she may never be able to strike out in anger, or even fire a shot, still she could hate, and she vowed that she would do that much for her slain husband and sons.

"Every time I here that old rain

crow or a whippoorwill, I try to think in my mind that, maybe its my boys, all of them out there in the po cousins bantering each other. But, then I remember William and Allen, and before the dream goes on the world takes hold of me."

"Stars sure are pretty tonight, like they are trying to cheer me up, but why? They watched all the harm done to my family, wouldn't help them." Slowly she invites a great sigh of resignation after casting a final, glance in the direction of the dark swamp, the way from which her boys would come. "If only I could quit this life and take it up again with the elders." No consolation would come to her this night, it would be lonely with much hurt. Tears would slowly stream from her eyes until the pillow would be soaked. The east had begun to lighten up by now and she knew that he would not be coming by tonight. She thought about her son out there in the night, with no warm food, a cold ground for a bed. If he goes by Jack and Beasley's, or Patrick's they'll feed him, she knew or even any of our people up on the Long Swamp. "Maybe she should become a grown woman and take her mind off of all this or even a conjuror," she thought "but then our people have been conjured to death already."

INTER-TRIBAL ELDER'S CORNER

Elders and Traditionalists from other tribes and groups are encouraged to submit news releases about happenings, gatherings, powwows, what is happening with elders and children. Keep them noncontroversial and nonpolitical. Submit articles to: Carolina Indian Voice, PO Box 1075, Pembroke, NC 28372.

The Carolina Indian Voice is interested in the happenings among the other tribes, nations, and organizations.

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