

DUNCAN U. FLETCHER, FLA., CHAIRMAN,
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JOHN W. KERN, IND.
GILBERT M. HUTCHCOCK, NEBR.
MARCUS A. SMITH, ARIZ.
REED SMOOT, UTAH.
JACOB H. GALLINGER, N. H.
CARROLL S. PAGE, VT.
JAMES M. GATHART, CLERK.

United States Senate,

COMMITTEE ON PRINTING

Washington, D. C.,

Sept. 6th, 1913.

Mrs. J. M. Willson, Jr.,
c/o Hotel Imperial,
New York City.



Dear Madam:

I have your letter with enclosure relating to the Seminole Indians of Florida, and note what you say concerning your interest in them, with which, however, I was familiar through articles that have appeared from time to time from your pen in the Florida Press, and which I have very much enjoyed reading.

My interest in the Seminoles dates back a number of years,--in fact, even before I was a member of the Florida Legislature. The character and habits of these people form an invaluable and integral part of Florida History. I formed a resolution long ago to do what I could in their behalf--at least, that is to say, to see that this great Government should mete to them simple justice if nothing more. Upon my election to the United States Senate much greater opportunity was given me through contact with the

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---2---

Bureau of Indian Affairs to familiarize myself with the Federal Government's view of these Florida Indians. I worked with the Department of the Interior, looking to having suitable provision made for them, and at my request the Department sent a Special Agent, Major Creel, to Florida, to thoroughly examine conditions, and he went, first, to Bishop Gray at Orlando, and then to Fort Myers, and into the Everglades, and ^{visited the} something like twenty thousand acres reservation on the west side. He returned to Washington and made his full report and I had several interviews with him. We at last got the President to withdraw Government lands further South towards the southwestern edge of the Glades, where most of the Indians were, and where there were some Government lands. I took the matter up with the Legislature at its 1911 Session, during the month of May, wrote to my friends there and State officials, and Mr. Creel went to Tallahassee in an effort to get some cooperation on the part of the State. I believe Captain Hendry introduced a bill in the House, but it never passed. It is necessary to get State cooperation in order that we may have sufficient quantity of lands in a compact body, to accommodate the Indians.

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--3--

In 1910 an appropriation of ten thousand dollars was made for the benefit of the Seminole Indians of Florida. The Indian Bureau never seemed to get around to the point of using this fund or devising any plan or methods for benefiting these Indians. The Bureau is familiar with Indian affairs as they obtain in the West, but the Seminoles of Florida are without legal status and apart from the other Indians. Their problems are altogether different. Perhaps the comparative small importance of their affairs as compared to the problems and interests affecting the other Indians of the country causes the Bureau to overlook, and postpone, and delay action. I have prodded them from time to time, and finally got the Bureau to send an agent down there to investigate the situation. Major Creel made quite a valuable report and endeavored to get State cooperation. He collected some important data as to the location of the different bodies, their habits, means of support and the like, and there the matter ended. I saw this appropriation was continued in each bill, year after year, and at last had to take a very firm and positive stand to the effect that if something was not done as Congress had authorized, I would endeavor to ascertain the reason.