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Jacksonville, Fla., May 12, 1915.

Mrs. Minnie Moore Wilson,  
Missimsee, Florida.

My Dear Mrs. Wilson:

I regret very much not having seen you again and have read your letter with much interest. I was in Tallahassee from Thursday afternoon until Saturday afternoon, but of course in such a short time, I would not get in touch with all the measures. I did not have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Spencer while there, which I greatly regret, however, Mrs. Cay and I did see Mr. Henderson, who is a Representative from Lee, who had a letter about the Indians which he was anxious for me to see, but I missed him, and Mrs. Cay is to see him and talk matters over.

I was unable to secure a copy of the Land Bill you speak of, but have written Mrs. Cay to get same and ascertain the quality of the land. I did not realize that there was any very great difference in our attitude towards the Indians, except that I am determined that if anything is done, that it shall be something worth while, and I do not approve of asking the Legislature for worthless land, and then continue coming back each year for more until we get what we want. It would be a very much better policy, from my long Legislative experience, to decide what we want and continue to ask for it until we get it.

If we should get a lot of worthless land reserved for the Indians, they would always use that acreage against the appropriation of good land when we wanted it, and that would place us at a disadvantage.



As I have mentioned to you before, antagonism never accomplishes anything, and as the Federation has a splendid standing with the officials in the State, we cannot afford to jeopardize that standing by any antagonism, and I could not permit an attack on the officials to be made in the name of the Federation, and of course if you still persist in taking that course, you would have to do it as an individual, and could not use our Federation pages for that purpose.

I would like to know exactly what you know that would be detrimental to the State, and what you know that would embarrass the officials, and what mode of procedure you would use.

I cannot think that you would want to hurt the good name of Florida in an ill-advised unthuisiasm, and probably with the best of intentions, to benefit the Indians. I cannot see where you would accomplish what you really intend to by such a method. I have always found that even if I disagreed with officials that it was best to use a great deal of policy, and women have had to use a great deal of policy in their work to get the men to listen to them at all, as great many men still think that women are carried away by sentiment, inthuisiasm and hysteria. You will remember our committee, Mrs. Young and Mrs. Wright, from the Federation, gave a very conservative report to the public of the conditions existing at Marianna Industrial School for Boys; that the Legislature and the newspapers said that it was a hysterical report from women. Now, I know since that they have all realized that this report embodied the true conditions existing at Marianna, and have agreed and it was found to be a fact, that the committee sent from the Legislature made even a worse report of the conditions existing that our two delegates, but you will see by this example that they are prone to treat our reports as imaginary, and that we will have to work very diplomatically to accomplish what we wish, and entirely free from antagonism.

Of course the Federation, as I have said, cannot afford to countenance any attack whatsoever on the State officials, on the members of the Legislature, or others.

I am thoroughly acquainted with the work in the Glades and probably know more of it than any other woman in the State, and my husband has had a great deal to do with the work for the State as well as private individuals as a lawyer, and I know of no scandal of any kind that could be unearthed in connection with the Glades, and even if there was, it would not be the part of the Federation to take part in giving Florida a black eye.

You are, of course, a member of the Federation Seminole Indian Committee. Any official reports on the Indian question should all come through your Chairman, Mrs. Stranahan, and you will please furnish her with any authentic data which is substantiated by facts, and free from antagonism, which you have in regard to the INDIAN question for her report at the Federation meeting in November.



Mrs. Chas. Cay of Tallahassee has been given special charge of the Indian work as she is extremely interested in them. We talked the matter over very thoroughly, but we did not have the Bill and our hands were tied. However, she will make further investigations, and we will do what we can for the best interests of the Indians you may rest assured.

It occurs to me that a policy of setting aside a good piece of land if it is possible to secure same, starting the agricultural and industrial training as Mr. Spencer has intimated he expects to do, and furnishing seeds, tools and provisions, if necessary, and saying to the Indians that they could secure this by moving to this tract of land. I think that it would not be long until they would all be comfortably settled.

Mr. Henderson of Lee told me that about five per cent. of the land in the 23,000 acres would be all that would be fit for cultivation, and this consisted of tracts contained in small hammocks, but it would make up quite an acreage in all, but it might be best to get a solid tract of land so that Mr. Spencer can follow out his ideas of industrial training.

I understand that the money appropriated by the Government will be used as found necessary to prevent the Indians from experiencing absolute want; that the Government would not permit them to starve, but it is also probably that if not at the present, in the future we might be able to get an appropriation from our Legislature to use in connection with the work, or through a memorial to get a larger appropriation from the Government for them.

I will try to get back to Tallahassee before the Legislature closes, and will do everything possible for the measures that the Federation is interested in, which includes the Seminole Indians, otherwise, there would have been no necessity to establish this committee for this work. The establishment of this committee was a proof of the intention of the Federation to advocate something definite for their relief.

I think you realize from this letter that there is not the difference that you imagined existing in our attitude towards the Indians, except that I do not feel that the drainage of the Everglades and the exploiting of land scandal, even if it exists, has anything whatsoever to do with the State's attitude towards the Indians, nor its duty to provide for them. They are Government charges, and the State may not feel that they have any right to meddle with Government work, as there is quite a definite line drawn between State and Government, but personally I should like very much to see them taken care of and provided for suitably, and will do what I can to help put their future on a substantial basis.

With best of good wishes,

Very sincerely,

(Mrs. H. A.) May M. Jennings  
President.