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Philadelphia, March 6, 1919.

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Mrs. J. M. Willson, Jr.,
Kissimmee, Florida.

Dear Mrs. Willson:

First of all, I am still alive; I did not have the "flu."

The letter from Mr. Willson reached the office while I was in Boston and was forwarded to me there. I thought that I had written to him in reply, but if I did the letter evidently miscarried. I at once forwarded it to our Washington Agent asking him to get me the latest information from the Indian Bureau regarding any plans for the Seminoles of Florida, so that I could let you know what was in contemplation.

Yesterday afternoon I started a letter to you, but in view of the uncertainty as to the fate of the Indian Appropriation Act for the coming year, I concluded to wait until our Washington Agent got here for our Board meeting, which was held at four o'clock.

Then your letter of the 3rd instant arrived this morning. Your letter of February 21st was held until I returned from New England. When I got back I had to start in and dispose an accumulation of matters, and also write a special article and reports for our Board meeting. Furthermore, the information that I wanted from Washington was slow in coming and I had to wait for that; hence my delay in replying to your letters.

As to the Washington end of it, the enclosed extract from the report of our agent, Mr. S. M. Brosius, will show you what the Indian Office had in mind, based on the passage of the Appropriation Act. That measure got through both Houses of Congress, but the Senate failed, at the last moment, to adopt the conference report and the bill did not get through. That means the measure will have to be re-introduced at the next special session that will probably convene in June, with a changed personnel, and it is hard to say how promptly it will be acted upon. Until the appropriation bill does become a law, however, the Indian Office will not be in a position to do much more than "mark time."

It will interest you to observe that an effort was made to have a delegation of the Florida Seminoles visit

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Washington, but without success.

As to the future status of the Seminole reservation of 100,000 acres, I believe, as do you and Mr. Willson, that it would have been better had the title thereto been given to the Federal Government, but Governor Catts was opposed to that idea, and so we had to aim for the next best thing, namely have it set aside (this tract) for "the perpetual use" of the Seminoles. If Governor Catts still feels the same way about the matter, I do not think there is anything to be gained by trying to get a bill through the legislature transferring title of the tract to the Federal Government. I suggested to Mr. Willson, last Summer, that it would be well for him to ascertain the Governor's views on this question before we took any further steps in that direction. He wrote me, under date of February 10, 1919, that he understood the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs "will make it a part of their legislative work at the next legislature, to ask that the 100,000 acres set aside by the State for the Seminoles, be turned over to the National Government." This would afford him a splendid opportunity to get an opinion from Governor Catts,--or to take the subject up with him.

As stated in Mr. Brosius' report, the Federal government will not put up any buildings on land that it does now own or control; so not much in the way of improvements would be done, on the new tract, under present circumstances. However, that does not alter the fact that the reservation provides what you call a "last foothold" for the Indians, and we want to make sure that it is not disturbed.

The fact that the wealthy corporation, to which you refer, has large holdings near the new reservation and will spend several million dollars in a drainage scheme,--if they actually do so,--is likely to enhance the value of the Seminole tract and put it very much "on the map."

I feel that the first step should be to ascertain the views of Governor Catts. If he now favors the idea of turning the tract over to the Federal Government, then we can get behind a bill and push it for all we are worth. How does this appeal to you? If your Mr. Bryan is in the next legislature, can you not talk to him?

If you can get any positive information showing that Mr. Brandon is too severe with the Seminoles, or is working along the wrong lines, I would be glad to have it.

I am pleased to learn that Mr. Sheehan is taking such a deep interest in the Seminoles. The more of his type we can have with us, the better.

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The war has greatly interfered with the administration of Indian Affairs and things have not progressed as smoothly as we might have hoped; but anything that would help to defeat Germany was accepted without murmur. The Commissioner, Mr. Sells, assured me that he wanted to visit the Florida Seminoles at the first opportunity, and I believe that he means to do so ~~at the first opportunity~~. He told me, during the winter, that he felt the Florida situation was such that matters could be handled by his Office without difficulty; that he intended to have the new tract gone over and a report made to him about it, but whether this has yet been done, I am unable to say. You will notice that Mr. Brosius states Mr. Brandon was doing certain war work, which doubtless took him away from his post, or put him in a position where he could not properly look into some of these matters. Now that he is back on the job, he ought to be able to follow up these things.

I have always contended with the Indian Office authorities, that if they established a school for the Florida Seminoles, it would be in charge of some of their educated men from Oklahoma. Of course, such a school cannot be started until money is available under the next appropriation Act.

I would like to get down to Washington soon and have another talk with Commissioner Sells, and ascertain, if possible, how far he is looking ahead on behalf of the Florida Seminoles.

As to Governor Catts: it is my thought that he could be better approached by some one like Mr. Willson than if an outsider "budded in" at this juncture; but I am open to conviction on this point.

I hope you both are now enjoying good health, and with kind regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,

M. K. Sniffen

I want to thank you for the copy of "When the Boys Come Back from France." I shall read it at the first opportunity, with pleasure, I am sure.