

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
March 23, 1934

Mr. Howard (by departmental request) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

A BILL

Authorizing the exchange of the lands reserved for the Seminole Indians in Florida for other lands.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that the Secretary of Interior be, and he hereby is, authorized in his discretion, to exchange lands in the state of Florida reserved for the Seminole Indians by Executive order of June 28, 1911, or by purchase for said Indians, or any part thereof, for lands owned by the State of Florida. Upon conveyance to the United States by the State of Florida of a sufficient title to the lands to be acquired for the use of the Seminole Indians, the Secretary of Interior is authorized to issue a patent in fee or make other proper conveyance to the State of Florida covering the lands granted in exchange.

In the opinion of the Officer in Charge of the Seminole Agency the present land conditions of the Seminoles have retarded more than any other one thing the industrial program of the Florida Indian Service. Present holdings are widely scattered over a large and inaccessible region. Much of the Indian land is swamp without drainage, highways, or access to markets. The Indian refuses to live on it, for he says, he cannot earn a living on it. No one man, nor any ten men can direct the development of each of so many widely scattered tracts of land. Whatever the Government undertakes must be centralized as a means of efficient administration. Three larger tracts, each one serving one of the three Indian groups, will afford an opportunity for a real industrial program.

At present about 90% of the Indians live on land owned by white people. Laws, which govern the expenditure of Federal funds, will not allow it to be used in establishing an Indian family on some white man's property. The solution must be in 1. giving the Indian the land he wants, the land he is satisfied to live on, 2 obtaining the title for the Federal Government, so the two may work together in the economic re-establishment of our needy Indian citizens. Such is the purpose of the above bill. With the cooperation of the State of Florida, now that much land is being sold for taxes, an enlightened land program may be set up for Florida's original citizens.

PRESENT CONDITION OF SEMINOLE LANDS

Bill, No. 8808, now before the House, is designed:

1. To consolidate these lands in three large tracts.
2. To obtain lands of greater commercial value.
3. To secure lands adapted to Indian needs, and attractive to Indian wishes and desires; lands wanted by the Indian.
4. To render possible an Indian Service industrial program for our Seminoles.

Aside from the settlement at the Agency, few of the 568 Indians live on their land. They occupy land owned by white people. An industrial set-up is impossible on such land.

