

ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA.,
Wednesday, March 14, 1917.

The committee met at 9.30 o'clock a. m., Hon. Charles D. Carter (chairman) presiding.

There were also present Congressmen Hayden, Sears, Tillman, Gandy, Hastings, Norton, and Ellsworth.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order. The committee will hear this morning Mr. J. M. Willson, who has come from Kissimmee to give us some information about the Florida Seminoles. Now, if you will give your full name and address, Mr. Willson, to the stenographer.

STATEMENT OF MR. J. M. WILLSON, JR., OF KISSIMMEE, FLA.

Mr. WILLSON. My name is J. M. Willson, jr., Kissimmee, Fla.

The CHAIRMAN. What is your business, Mr. Willson?

Mr. WILLSON. Real estate.

The CHAIRMAN. How long have you lived in the State of Florida?

Mr. WILLSON. Thirty years.

The CHAIRMAN. You have been among the Seminoles of Florida, have you?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes. I have known them ever since I came here. I have known them ever since, and hunted and fished with them during all these years.

The CHAIRMAN. You are intimate and thoroughly familiar with their habits, characteristics, and conditions?

Mr. WILLSON. I am; yes. I know a great many of them personally.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee has been presented with a book, "The Least Known Wilderness of America, the Everglades of Florida." This seems to have been written by Mrs. Minnie Moore Willson. Are you acquainted with Mrs. Minnie Moore Willson?

Mr. WILLSON. She is my wife.

The CHAIRMAN. Proceed in your own way, Mr. Willson, and make your statement about the history and condition of the Florida Seminoles.

Mr. WILLSON. Well, the first and greatest need of the Seminoles, in my judgment, is land for homes, and the friends of the Seminoles in Florida have been working for years trying to get the Legislature of Florida to set aside a tract of land for their benefit. I think the prospects this year are brighter than ever before to accomplish that. Gov. Catts and I have had a few talks, and he seems to be sympathetic with the Indians and is willing to do anything that he considers right and proper in the matter. I think some of our executives have not been friendly to them heretofore, and that is the reason they have not had the land long ago.

As I see the matter, Mr. Chairman, the land for these Indians is a Florida problem, and Florida ought to give it to them. It is justly due them, and they ought to have it from the State of Florida, because Florida has taken these lands from them, and they have been a part of it ever since before the United States acquired Florida. They had this land then. Therefore, I think they are justly entitled to a home here. They would never consent to go West or to be moved out of the lower parts of this State, but I think if they had homes or lands where they could go, where they would not be molested, and then their relatives in Oklahoma, I think, with the National Government's aid—those Indians, with a little bit of help, could be induced to go into the cattle industry, and some of their own people from Oklahoma could come here and put up industrial schools.

The CHAIRMAN. You mean to be supported by the Federal Government—industrial schools to be supported by the Federal Government?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes. Pay the teachers and pay for the buildings; yes, sir. Let Florida provide the land, and let the National Government then assist with the other work. I don't believe it would be a very difficult thing, although it would take some time, to get these Indians, when they had the land and thought they would not be molested any more, to go there and locate and move in and make permanent homes. My idea is that they need at least 100,000 acres. In a body of that kind, a tract of land of that size—well, of course, I don't know; this is simply guesswork; but you would not get more than 10 per cent tillable. But they do need that much for a hunting preserve and where they can go and engage in cattle raising. I don't mean to fence in that land at one time; but I mean they should have that land provided for them, so that in the future that land can be divided up and homes built on it.

Now, I can tell you what I saw down at an Indian town last winter, if you care to hear it. I made a trip down there with the Indian Rights Association, their secretary, Mr. Sniffen, and one of their directors, Mr. Elkington; and at the Indian town they have a school, and there were four Indians going to school that I have known for 20 years, ever since they were children, and I was asking about where Billy Buster's camp was—Billy Buster is Tallahassee's oldest son. I have known him ever since he was 15 years of age. He is about my age, I guess. And they said, "Well, it is over near the school." Some one told me—I think a white man—that he had a camp over near the school or back of the school; out in that direction.

It was some miles away when I was talking with this party. So Mr. Sniffen and I went down to the school; then we went to look around for this Billy's camp, but we found a camp over behind the school about a quarter of a mile. There were some Indian shacks, but they were fixed up a little bit better than usual. They had a nice two-horse wagon and two or three dogs chained up in the yard, and they had a pump, and there were one or two little ditches cut as if they were draining the water. Everything else, though, was just like Indians would leave it. I didn't understand it. And there was not anyone there, but later in the day I saw some Indians who lived over half a mile away, and I told them I didn't find Billy at home. They said, "No; Billy don't live there. That is Indian house. Billy made that, but Billy went off on hunting trip," which they do for two

weeks at a time after alligators. They said: "While Billy was gone white man came, moved in. When Billy came back he told them, 'This my house'; but they told him, 'No; this my house'; and he hiepus"—that is the Indian word for "go"—he had gone. We found Billy about 6 miles away from there, living in a very poor shack. The poorest dogs and chickens I have ever seen were at Billy Buster's camp. The chickens you couldn't keep from under your feet. They just got right around looking for a crumb, and the dogs were so thin that they could hardly walk. It was very pitiful.

Well, now, where the Indians are allowed to stay in a little place they will clear up a small piece of ground, put out sugar cane, put out pumpkins and sweet potatoes, and with the little hunting they can do they can make a living. With a little help to encourage them to a better way of farming, a better way of living, they are absolutely self-supporting and independent. I would not ask—I would not want you to give them anything in the way of money or anything like that, except that in case of sickness or something like that, but simply give them a white man's chance to make a living. That is all they ask; that is all I want to see them have. Give them the lands, and then a little help for industrial schools, and they will make the highest character of American citizenship.

Now, just to show you, when the Spanish War was on, old Tallahassee, the old chief at that time with that part of the band, and Capt. Tom Tiger—by the way, he is the father of these children you saw at the school in Fort Lauderdale—when Tallahassee was up war was threatening, and I asked Tallahassee if he would go to fight. He says, "Yes"—he was old then, but he says, "Me shoot good; me go." I said, "You want to go fight Spaniards?" and he says, "Me go; Indians all go help." They feel they have been badly treated by the white man, and still they recognize the white man as able to help them, and they will accept help from him, but they are suspicious of the Government. Now, that is the trouble about the matter.

Mr. HAYDEN. It is your idea, then, that there should be some industrial training rather than just mere education given them?

Mr. WILLSON. Industrial training is the thing for them; yes, sir.

Mr. HAYDEN. For instance, if they could be provided with land and then a practical farmer placed with them to instruct them in farming and assist them in marketing their crops, would that be your idea?

Mr. WILLSON. And have a school there where the smaller children could go to school and learn the rudiments; yes, sir.

I have known the Indians for about 34 years. Before I came here I used to come down and hunt and fish with them, and I have been here 30 years.

Mr. SEARS. Is it or is it not a fact that you have been on a great many hunts with these Indians and taken great interest in the Indians?

Mr. WILLSON. I know a great many of the Indians personally and have fished and camped with them for the last 30 years—last 34 years; sometimes two or three trips a winter and sometimes skip two or three years before I would take a trip.

Mr. SEARS. To show the friendship that the Indians have for you, will you state to the committee about the Indians coming up to see you now?

Mr. WILLSON. When the Indians are sick or need something they don't hesitate to come up. They are so far away now that they can't make the trip often. Two years ago six of them came up and spent Christmas with us and stayed here for several days. They had one of their members—one of their party was sick at the time, and she stayed at our house, and in a week or 10 days she was well enough to go back, and she finally got all right. A couple of months afterwards two others came up that were sick and stayed a while, and—well, they look upon me as being their friend. I can say that without any egotism.

Mr. SEARS. When they write you they will come do you expect them?

Mr. WILLSON. Absolutely; when they say they will come—and, by the way, I had an invitation two months ago, I guess, to come down to their hunting dance. Willson Tiger wrote me when their hunting dance was to come off and wanted me to come down. I couldn't go because I was busy, but I appreciated it as a great honor that they would write to me and tell me when it was and ask me to come.

Mr. NORRON. How many of them know how to read and write?

Mr. WILLSON. I taught several to read and write. I don't know more than a dozen, I suppose. There may be a great many more than that in the Big Cypress that can read and write. I know the Cow Creek bunch better than any of the other Indians, because they have been closer to me and I have seen them more often.

Mr. NORRON. How do they learn to read and write?

Mr. WILLSON. My experience, my first experience—I was camped on Lake Rosalie, and it was raining one day; I was down on a fishing trip, and they were camped not over 300 or 400 yards from us, and one day Billy Ham and Billy Buster, Tallahassee's two boys, came over and brought a plank like dry goods come on, or ribbons come on—a thin plank or board—and said, "You make words?" I didn't know what was meant at first. I had been picking up a few of their words, asking them what certain words like "boat" and "dog" and "deer," and things like that were, and they explained to me that they wanted the alphabet. Well, for about a week I taught; then I made the alphabet and had them copy it; then showed them how to put the words together, and quite a few of them have learned to write—I don't think they have gotten any very extensive vocabulary in the white man's dialect, but quite a few of them can write their names and write their addresses.

Mr. NORRON. They are very adept at writing and copying, are they not?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes. If I had thought, I could have brought you up some of the attempts they have made at following copy.

Mr. NORRON. You said a moment ago, Mr. Willson, that the Seminoles were suspicious of the Government, while, at the same time, they seemed to look with considerable friendship upon the white people. Isn't that due largely to the fact that the people locally here constantly tell the Indians that the Government has been unfair to them, has mistreated them, and have drilled that idea into the Indians? Now, I make that inquiry for the reason that since I have been down in this section of the country for the last few days I have heard people constantly say, "The Government has done a

great injustice to the Indians," and while talking to the Indians—the few traders we have met have emphasized that.

Mr. WILLSON. There is an element in this State that has been opposed to the Indians always, and they don't want to see them here; they don't want them left here; they don't want them to have any land here; and they have been powerful enough, in my judgment, to keep them from having any land set aside by the legislature. They defeated the measure in one way or another, and that same element is at work to-day, I think, fostering all the troubles they can make and keeping the Indian suspicious of the white man and of the Government; yes, sir.

Mr. TILLMAN. Now, is that an old element—an old-time element—or is it composed of people that came here recently?

Mr. WILLSON. I think it is the old-time element.

Mr. TILLMAN. Describe more accurately as to what it is and who compose it—not giving names. Just explain the whole thing. Develop that idea. I would like to hear just who they are and what motives influence them, without giving names.

Mr. WILLSON. My idea is that there has been a strong political element in this State that has acquired a great deal of land at a very low price and they—this is my opinion of the thing, you understand—they think if these Indians are set aside a piece of land here, there, or some place else in the Everglades it will operate two ways: In the first place, if that land is taken, if given by the State of Florida to these Indians, there is that much of that land disposed of that they would not have a chance at. This is one thing. Another feature is that that piece of land might be where they wanted to run a railroad or a road, or it might interfere in some way so that they couldn't cross that piece of land after the Indians were once established on it, and it might interfere with their plans in that way.

Mr. TILLMAN. This opposition, then, to the Indians is based largely on selfishness?

Mr. WILLSON. Absolutely; yes, sir.

Mr. SEARS. Isn't it also based, Mr. Willson, on the fact that the Indians have gradually been crowded back from place to place? For instance, when we first went to Kissimmee the Indians were near there. They are now, the nearest, approximately 150 miles from there. The laws of the State of Florida permitting those lands to be sold to individuals, the individual would acquire a debt and the white man would have a right to take that land and would go and take it and thereby force the Indians farther back.

Mr. WILLSON. Yes.

Mr. SEARS. What do the Indians do about establishing homes now? Do you know anything about that? If you try to get them to move onto land and better their conditions, what do they say about the white man?

Mr. WILLSON. They are suspicious and think the white man will simply come along and take it again. The Indians know a good piece of land, and when they select a little spot—it may not be over an acre or two—they go to work with a great deal of labor and clear up that piece of ground and put it into cultivation in their way. When it is developed—maybe put out a few orange trees—when it is developed the white man will come along, or he will go and get the numbers on that land and go to the land office or to the railroad

company, or whoever owns the land, and he will buy that piece of land for probably \$1.25 an acre, the State price, and then he goes and takes it. The Indian has it fenced and got it in cultivation, probably spent what would cost the man two or three hundred dollars to clear up. Then he moves in there and says, "This is my land; you move on." The Indian never questions it; he simply moves on.

Mr. SEARS. As a matter of fact, the white man has a right to take that because he owns the land; he has bought it and paid for it.

Mr. WILLSON. Yes; he has a legal right to do it. Morally, I do not think so.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, as I understand your laws here, no white man has any right to the land until he has purchased it from the State, has he?

Mr. WILLSON. No, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. So I assume that the procedure is that they first purchase the land, when they find a piece of land that they like with an Indian on it, and then they come to the Indian with the title to the land and tell him to move off.

Mr. WILLSON. I can give you an example of that—I don't know, it may be 15 years ago, possibly—old Tallahassee and two or three more of his tribe came up—they were then on the east side of Lake Okeechobee—and he came up to Kissimmee, and I didn't know—I knew something had brought him, because he was very old; I knew something had brought him, but it was probably the next day before he opened up his mind to me. I took him home with me and made him comfortable, and I saw that he was excited and very nervous, but to make a long story short, he said that some white men had come in and had taken his spring and his house down there and told him to move on. He had been living in that place for I don't know how many years—quite a number of years—and there was quite a village around there. So I think it was at that time that our Seminole Society was formed. Mr. Ingraham, you were a member, and Bishop Gray was at the head of it.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. What character of land was it that you had in mind, Mr. Willson, when you were speaking of the number of acres you thought could be set aside?

Mr. WILLSON. We think anything we could get.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. You think land which borders on the Everglades would be all right?

Mr. WILLSON. Absolutely all right—anything that we could get. I am quite sure that if we could get 100,000 acres of land, there would be enough land in the tract to make their homes and fields.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Don't you think a much less amount of land than that would be sufficient?

Mr. WILLSON. Well, I don't think it would be sufficient, because there is so little of it that would be available for agriculture. But they need a hunting preserve and a place where they can raise cattle.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Don't you consider that there is a prospect that the Everglades land will be drained, and in the future some of it will be very good farming land?

Mr. WILLSON. Some of it; yes, sir.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Considering that, don't you think a very much smaller amount than the amount you name will be sufficient if part of

it were on the edge of the Everglades, and a small portion in the Everglades which they could use for hunting?

Mr. WILLSON. As I understand, in the big cypress and the Everglades region, there are miles and miles and miles of that country that never will be in cultivation; where there is some of the Everglades muck lands, that will be put into cultivation and used.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. When you speak of such a large tract, is that upon the theory entirely that the great bulk of it would be in the Everglades which never could be drained and will never become agricultural land?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir; or else be in a class that they never would attempt to drain or be worthless if it was drained.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. You didn't have in mind giving them such a tract as that of good tillable land, did you?

Mr. WILLSON. Oh, no; I don't think there is any possibility of letting them have so much land that would be good. If they can get a few spots on a tract like that, that would be all I could expect they would get.

Mr. NORTON. Where is the best Everglades land? About what location?

Mr. WILLSON. I don't know, sir. I haven't been over the Everglades enough to give you even a guess.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Willson, you spoke of this antipathy of the Seminoles to the white man and the Federal Government. Does that extend to the State government, too?

Mr. WILLSON. It has in the past. It extended to some of the State officials, I think. Not as a body; you understand, because I think they have some friends among the State officials, but in the powers that have been, I think they have been antagonistic to them; yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, you spoke, as I understood you, of two causes for that antipathy. The first was a certain element in the State that kept before them all the time the statement that they were being mistreated by the white man and the Federal Government, these persons doing that for a selfish purpose. Then your other reason was the actual mistreatment of the Indians by the white man, the Federal Government, to wit, crowding him back and taking his home. Now, are there any other reasons why they have an antipathy to the Federal Government and the white man? Are there any other incidents that have happened in the State of Florida that cause them to be suspicious of the white man and the white man's government?

Mr. WILLSON. You mean any causes operating now?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes; or in the past, either.

Mr. WILLSON. Well, I think it was the Government's treatment of the Indians back in the beginning—I think that was the first ground for this.

The CHAIRMAN. What was that treatment?

Mr. WILLSON. Well, trying to move them west; hunting them with bloodhounds; putting a price on their heads; and letting the people that wanted the Indians' cattle—and imagined there were a great many runaway slaves among the Indians—that wanted the Indians away from here, and in that way they would put up a great clamor for the Government to move them west.

The CHAIRMAN. Have you in mind any specific incidents of that character?

Mr. WILLSON. No; except during the Seminole War that was the cry.

The CHAIRMAN. How long was the Seminole War?

Mr. WILLSON. The last one, I think, was seven years.

The CHAIRMAN. How did that war terminate? How was it ended?

Mr. WILLSON. The Indians were taken west—all they could catch and all they could induce to go west—were moved west, to Oklahoma.

The CHAIRMAN. Was that the war that Osceola was captured in?

Mr. WILLSON. I think so.

The CHAIRMAN. Could you state any facts about the capture of Osceola—give us any history of that.

Mr. WILLSON. Except what history gives us—that he was captured under a flag of truce when he came in to make a treaty with the National Government, with the soldiers. He was surrounded when he came with two or three of his warriors near St. Augustine—captured under this flag of truce and died at Charleston.

The CHAIRMAN. Was he invited to come in?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. By the Army officers?

Mr. WILLSON. By the Army officers; yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. What was done with him when he was captured?

Mr. WILLSON. He was put into prison here at Fort Marion and then later moved to Charleston to the prison there.

The CHAIRMAN. When he came in under this flag of truce, did the Federal authorities attempt to make any treaty with him?

Mr. WILLSON. I don't think so, sir. They considered—the commanding officer considered he had done his duty and gotten him by any means he could, and it wasn't with the intention of making any treaty. The Indians had come in with the intention of making a treaty.

The CHAIRMAN. How do the Indians regard the capture of Osceola?

Mr. WILLSON. They regard it as an outrage.

The CHAIRMAN. Are they considerably incensed about it, or just take it as a natural consequence?

Mr. WILLSON. I think the older ones felt very bitterly, but I think the younger generation is forgetting it, and it is dying out with them. They never mention it among the younger ones.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, Mr. Willson, you spoke of the State of Florida setting aside 100,000 acres for the Seminole Indians. Do you think the State authorities could be induced to do that?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir; it looks more promising in the present legislature than it ever has.

The CHAIRMAN. Has that ever been attempted in the past?

Mr. WILLSON. A number of times. One bill passed the legislature granting them 10,000 acres.

Mr. SEARS. What became of that?

Mr. WILLSON. I don't know about that. The National Government selected 300,000 acres or more at one time, and the legislature incorporated that into a bill and passed it. That bill—when they went to locate the land, the land that had been selected had been acquired by private interests.

In the 1913 legislature there was a bill for 200,000 acres passed, and it was vetoed by Gov. Trammel.

The CHAIRMAN. On what grounds?

Mr. WILLSON. I wish I had brought his letter. I think he said it was too much, taking the people's land and giving it to these Indians. It was too much; they had no right to do it—something like that—that this land belonged to the people of Florida, and they had no right to take it and give it to a few. I think that was the position. That was—I said 1913. The next legislature that met—I guess I have got those years probably mixed up—the second time it met, the bill was killed in committee.

(See p. 96 for copy of bill and p. 98 for copy of Gov. Trammel's veto.)

The CHAIRMAN. This bill?

Mr. WILLSON. Two years ago; yes. The 1913 bill was vetoed. Then when the 1915 bill came up before the house, it was killed in committee.

The CHAIRMAN. How do you mean "killed in committee"?

Mr. WILLSON. It never—it was to be brought up and they pushed it back and pushed it back until the legislature adjourned.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee didn't make an unfavorable report on it or table it?

Mr. WILLSON. They didn't; no, sir. The bill was to come up, as I understand it—Mr. Spencer, the Indian agent, was there at Tallahassee at the time, and so were Mrs. Willson and myself, and the bill was to come up one evening. It was put off until the next day, and that evening, I think, one party in this State, who has been opposed to the Indians, arrived at Tallahassee and the bill never did come out of the committee; and we thought that influence killed it.

The CHAIRMAN. How much land did that bill carry—provide for?

Mr. WILLSON. I believe that was for 200,000 acres.

The CHAIRMAN. Have any attempts been made since then?

Mr. WILLSON. This is the next attempt, the present legislature, and we have been hoping to get something through this present session of the legislature.

The CHAIRMAN. How often does the Florida Legislature meet?

Mr. WILLSON. Every two years.

The CHAIRMAN. This is the first session of the legislature since then?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. SEARS. They meet next April.

Mr. WILLSON. There have been three bills—I can't give you the exact data on that—I wish I had posted my memory on it. I think the bill has been passed three times by the legislature. There was only one dissenting vote when the bill passed before, that Gov. Trammel vetoed.

The CHAIRMAN. That was the 1913 bill?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Prior to that there was another bill passed?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. What year was that, do you recall?

Mr. WILLSON. I do not—1898, I think.

The CHAIRMAN. This land that you propose for the State of Florida to set aside for the Indians is valuable land, is it?

Mr. WILLSON. No; I don't think so. There might be some of it that is valuable.

The CHAIRMAN. What would it be worth in its present state per acre?

Mr. WILLSON. Now, I couldn't say that, because my idea would be to give them that land any place they could get it. Some of that land is valuable and some of it is hardly worth the taxes paid on it, so I couldn't give you that.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, what is Florida land worth now?

Mr. SEARS. They sold some for \$2 an acre before the drainage, didn't they?

Mr. WILLSON. Some of that land has been purchased for 42 cents an acre.

Mr. SEARS. I mean in recent years, since the drainage?

Mr. WILLSON. At how much?

Mr. SEARS. \$2 an acre—I think that was the last sale. Before the drainage—if you can not give this directly, the committee won't expect you to—but practically before the drainage started, but after it was authorized, there was a large tract of 100,000 or 200,000 acres sold at \$2 an acre by the State?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. SEARS. That money to be used in draining the everglades?

Mr. WILLSON. I think so; yes, sir.

Mr. SEARS. That was practically before any drainage was done. Since then—I don't know whether you know it or not, but several million dollars have been spent for the drainage, and they are still working on the drainage proposition.

Mr. WILLSON. That is true.

Mr. SEARS. The value of lands in this State—you are in the real estate business—depends upon the locality and the land?

Mr. WILLSON. Absolutely; yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. What is the lowest price you know of land selling for, Mr. Willson?

Mr. WILLSON. Now, you mean?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes; of any character.

Mr. WILLSON. \$2.75, I believe.

The CHAIRMAN. What is the highest price you know of it selling for?

Mr. WILLSON. Some of it is selling as high as \$150 an acre.

The CHAIRMAN. Would your society propose that this reservation be set aside out of the high-priced land or low-priced land?

Mr. WILLSON. Low-priced land.

The CHAIRMAN. All together?

Mr. WILLSON. My idea would be to take it any place we could get it for them. There will be enough good land for the Indians' purposes and for hunting and stock raising too.

The CHAIRMAN. And that land could be procured for \$2.75 an acre?

Mr. WILLSON. I imagine so, sir; yes, sir.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. What lands now does the State of Florida own? Where are they located?

Mr. WILLSON. The Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. McRae, sent me a list of Florida's holdings recently. I didn't bring it with me, but

I think they range in probably a dozen southern counties—probably more than that.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Now, the State owns everglades, does it not?

Mr. WILLSON. A great many of them they have sold.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. But the principal holdings of the State are in what we call the Everglades.

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. And that is in the southern counties you speak of?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. The State doesn't own, generally speaking, lands in the northern part of the State, which are fruit lands?

Mr. WILLSON. No, sir.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. When you have in mind the legislature providing lands for the Indians, then you have in mind, generally, that the lands would be provided from what we call Everglades and in that region?

Mr. WILLSON. In that region; yes, sir. Not necessarily, now, if you let the Everglades take in the big cypress country all south of Lake Okechobee clear across the State; but if you narrow the Everglades down to the muck lands on the east side I would not take it. I would put it into the lower part of the State.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. The cypress lands that you speak of are south of Lake Okechobee?

Mr. WILLSON. West and south.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. West and south of Lake Okechobee. That also contains some State lands?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. And you are having that in mind also?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. And what would the lands in that portion be worth south and west of Lake Okechobee, which you call the cypress region? What, generally, on the average would lands there be worth?

Mr. WILLSON. The statement I made before would probably apply to that, because I had in mind the whole peninsula of Florida, not separating the Everglades from the rest.

Mr. ELLSWORTH. You mean the valuation of \$2.75 would cover the Everglades and land south and west of Lake Okechobee called the cypress region?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. SEARS. Of course, there are some lands in there that would be, perhaps, more valuable?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. SEARS. I want to get that in, because somebody might misunderstand Mr. Willson.

Mr. WILLSON. No; I do not mean to discriminate. There are spots on both sides, probably, in the Everglades proper and in the Big Cypress.

Mr. SEARS. Taking in a hundred thousand acres of land, the good and bad, you think could possibly be bought for \$2.75 an acre in its present condition?

Mr. Willson, the committee has found considerable trouble in getting at or near these Seminoles. We visited three camps which the Indians had left very shortly before we arrived; that is, as a proof,

at one I believe there was a fire and cooking, etc. We found at one camp 15 or 20 or more, where we took a hearing, and had hearings of the Indians Tony Tommy and Willie Willie. You mentioned to the committee just now that five or six Indians, one Christmas, came up to visit you. I was there at that time; and, that the committee may understand whether the Indians are always that way or not or whether they are different with friends, will you explain to the committee what those Indians did?

Mr. WILLSON. Well, they stayed at my home and went to the Christmas tree with me, and the pastor of the church—Dr. Holt—was a friend of the Indians and spoke the language.

Mr. SEARS. From what State?

Mr. WILLSON. He is from Oklahoma. And he made them welcome and gave them front seats, and they enjoyed the Christmas tree very much, and each of them received a present, with which they were very much delighted. These Indians were an old Indian woman, Martha Tiger, her son, two other grown men, and two children—Tallahassee's grandchildren.

Mr. SEARS. How old were those children?

Mr. WILLSON. Probably 11 and 13 years of age.

Mr. SEARS. They received presents from that Christmas tree?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. SEARS. Was that the first time they had ever seen a Christmas tree?

Mr. WILLSON. The first time they had ever seen a white man's house, I expect. They had never seen a Christmas tree or anything of the kind. They were very much interested, and stayed for several days, and received a great many visits from the townspeople and presents from them.

Mr. SEARS. What did they do with those presents?

Mr. WILLSON. They took them back home with them with great delight.

Mr. SEARS. Then, when you once get their confidence it isn't hard to deal with them?

Mr. WILLSON. No; when they make a friend they never forget him, and they put all confidence and trust in him, and they are very loyal. Strangers they are afraid of—or, that is, they are timid. That is the reason you didn't find them.

Mr. TILLMAN. I think I understood you to say, Mr. Willson, that your opinion, as a citizen of Florida and a friend of the Indians, that the State of Florida should give them these lands and not the General Government?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir; that is my idea.

Mr. TILLMAN. As a matter of fact, didn't the General Government give to the State of Florida something like 5,000,000 acres of these Everglades?

Mr. WILLSON. And the Indians were part of those Everglades at the time, and had their homes there and have been on them ever since.

Mr. TILLMAN. And, as a matter of fact, hasn't the State of Florida alienated about 4,000,000 acres of those Everglades and has only a million acres left itself?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir; and never provided anything for the Indians.

Mr. TILLMAN. Your theory now is that the State of Florida should give them 100,000 acres?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. TILLMAN. All you think the General Government should do, then, would be to establish industrial schools and pay the salaries of the teachers?

Mr. WILLSON. And help them to get established in the live-stock industry.

Mr. TILLMAN. I will ask you if you don't think it would be better to have Indian women of the Seminole Tribe in Oklahoma over here to teach in those industrial schools?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir; they could do it much easier, and they have their confidence. It would be much more quickly done.

Mr. TILLMAN. The United States Government, then, should not appropriate any very large sum of money, but just what is necessary to procure equipment and pay the salaries of the teachers, and the State of Florida should do the rest in the matter of giving them homes or lands?

Mr. WILLSON. That is my idea.

The CHAIRMAN. Does the fact that a person can speak the Seminole tongue give them any better opportunity to get the confidence of the Seminoles?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir; they get acquainted with them and get confidence established much quicker.

I just want to say that the friends of the Indians in the State are not opposed to the National Government providing this land, providing the State would not do it, but I think it is the State's duty to do it. The Indians had their homes on these lands that have been appropriated and sold. That really belonged to the Indians when you come down to what is actually—if there was power enough to sift the titles of a great many of those islands and hummocks in the Everglades, they would belong to the Indians to-day, because they have lived there probably 50 years or 75 years on those same places that have been given away and acquired by the white man, but which really belonged to the Indians.

Mr. SEARS. You also stated, prior to Judge Tillman's question, that you thought the Government ought to help them get started in the live-stock business?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir; and one other thing: I think the National Government ought to have general supervision over these Indians.

Mr. TILLMAN. Undoubtedly over the schools, pay the salaries of the teachers, and pay for live-stock equipment, and have supervision.

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir; and also if the Indians ever get able to take care of a piece of land, they should give it to them as an individual. I think they can do that better than the State can.

Mr. HASTINGS. How many of these Indian camps have you visited personally?

Mr. WILLSON. I should say 50. I don't know exactly.

Mr. HASTINGS. What was the largest camp in point of numbers?

Mr. WILLSON. In the number of individuals in them?

Mr. HASTINGS. Yes.

Mr. WILLSON. Probably 60 people, I should say.

Mr. HASTINGS. How many houses have you seen built among the Seminoles? I don't mean these thatched top and open houses.

Mr. WILLSON. Their kind of houses—the kind they live in and make themselves—or do you mean the white man's house?

Mr. HASTINGS. Did you ever see any white man's house among them?

Mr. WILLSON. Old Tallahassee had a white man's house, and he paid \$100 for it. He bought that and paid for it and then had to leave it. That was the only one.

Mr. HASTINGS. How many pieces of ground have you seen in actual cultivation among the Seminoles by the Seminoles—not what you have heard? Now, you have visited from time to time during the past 30 years a number of these camps. Now, isn't the cultivation of a tract of ground an exception and not the rule among the Seminoles?

Mr. WILLSON. No, sir; not in the way they are cultivating. You see, each of those families have a place somewhere maybe 5 miles from where they are living, where they have a garden and pumpkins, sweet potatoes, and beans.

Mr. HASTINGS. Their cultivation, then, consists of a tract of ground about the size of a garden in the North?

Mr. WILLSON. A white man's garden; yes, sir. Their field would be a small tract probably from a quarter of an acre to half an acre, or something like that.

Mr. HASTINGS. Who works these patches of ground, the men or the women?

Mr. WILLSON. Both of them. The men make the fences and I think the women do a great deal of the work. I think the men help them some.

Mr. HASTINGS. But they have lived in the past chiefly by hunting?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir; hunting and fishing.

Mr. HASTINGS. Hunting the otter and alligator and other game?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. And selling hides, eating fish, and eating some of the wild meat they kill?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. You spoke awhile ago of a school somewhere down there where there were a few of these Indian children going to school—was that a white school which a few of the Indian children attended?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. Where was that, at Indiantown?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. Do you know of any other school other than that where any of these Seminole Indians attended at any time in the past 10 years?

Mr. WILLSON. I have heard of a school at Lauderdale—Fort Lauderdale.

Mr. HASTINGS. We visited that. Do you know of any other than the Fort Lauderdale camp?

Mr. WILLSON. And the Indiantown school.

Mr. HASTINGS. Other than those two schools—Indiantown and Fort Lauderdale?

Mr. WILLSON. No, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. You know of no distinctly Indian schools anywhere?

Mr. WILLSON. No, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. Do you have any information as to how long these children attended the Indiantown school, and whether or not they learned to read and write—I mean to read?

Mr. WILLSON. I talked with the teacher of that school, a Virginia man that was teaching it, and he said they were progressing nicely—making rapid progress.

Mr. HASTINGS. How long ago was that?

Mr. WILLSON. That was a year ago now.

Mr. HASTINGS. Do you know whether any of them during the past year have attended school?

Mr. WILLSON. I heard that those same Indians went over to Fort Lauderdale and went to the school there.

Mr. HASTINGS. Then you heard they were the same children?

Mr. WILLSON. Some of them; yes, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. How many?

Mr. WILLSON. There were five at Indiantown, I think, going to school when I was there.

Mr. HASTINGS. Have these Indians ever had any live stock—horses or cattle or hogs?

Mr. WILLSON. Years ago they did; yes, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. How many years ago?

Mr. WILLSON. When I first knew Tallahassee, 30 years ago, he had three or four head of horses.

Mr. HASTINGS. Let us confine ourselves to 10 years ago. Have any of the Seminole Indians within the past 10 years had any horses, and if so how many?

Mr. WILLSON. A year ago Billy Bowlegs owned a horse and wagon. We hired him and his team for several days. They have oxen.

Mr. HASTINGS. Was that the only horse at that time that you knew of among the Seminoles, so far as you personally knew?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. There might have been others, but you didn't know it?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. They had a few oxen, didn't they?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir; and a good many hogs.

Mr. HASTINGS. Did they have some hogs?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. They had no cows that they milked?

Mr. WILLSON. No.

Mr. HASTINGS. They don't know anything about milking cows, so far as you know, now?

Mr. WILLSON. No; I think they have kept out of the live-stock business on account of the white neighbors.

Mr. HASTINGS. Do they raise any chickens?

Mr. WILLSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. HASTINGS. Do they raise a good many of them, or is it an exception?

Mr. WILLSON. Each of the camps that I visited here had quite a few chickens last year.

Mr. HASTINGS. Are these Indians law abiding?

Mr. WILLSON. Absolutely.

Mr. HASTINGS. What about their morals?

Mr. WILLSON. Finest in the world. There is not 600 men that I could pick out any place that would compare with the morals of those Indians, in my judgment.

Mr. HASTINGS. They are addicted, however, to the use of intoxicating liquor when they can get hold of it?

Mr. WILLSON. When they are around where they can get hold of it. They have been taught to drink, to their detriment.

Mr. HAYDEN. Mr. Chairman, at this time I desire to insert in the record this leaflet printed by the Society of Friends of the Florida Seminoles:

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF THE FLORIDA SEMINOLES.

OFFICERS.

President: Rt. Rev. William Crane Gray, Bishop of South Florida Episcopal Church, Orlando.

Vice president: Rev. D. A. Dodge, Presbyterian minister, Kissimmee.

Treasurer: C. A. Carson, State senator of Orange and Osceola Counties, Kissimmee.

Secretary: J. M. Willson, jr., Kissimmee.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary.

Hon. George W. Wilson, editor in chief Times-Union and Citizen, Jacksonville.

Dr. J. E. Brecht, United States Indian agent, Fort Myers.

Capt. F. A. Hendry, representative Lee County, Fort Thompson.

R. H. Seymour, attorney at law, Kissimmee.

P. A. Vans Agnew, editor Valley Gazette, Kissimmee.

AIM OF THE SOCIETY.

The Friends of the Florida Seminoles is a purely humanitarian society, neither sectarian nor partisan.

Its object is solely to befriend the remnant of Seminoles in Florida; in accordance with the policy of the Government as outlined in the Secretary of the Interior's report of 1898.

The society will strenuously oppose the removal of the Seminoles from the State against their consent. In other ways the society will endeavor to help the Seminoles in their education and industrial development.

The society earnestly appeals to the people of Florida to take a friendly interest in the future fate of this forlorn remnant of a brave and free race, who are one of Florida's most native possessions, with a view to securing for them permanent homes in the unsettled portion of the State before it is too late, and helping them to enjoy the benefits of civilization.

CONSTITUTION OF FRIENDS OF THE FLORIDA SEMINOLES.

ARTICLE I.

The name of the society shall be Friends of the Florida Seminoles.

ARTICLE II.

The object of the society shall be to better the condition of the Florida Seminoles and oppose their deportation from the State against their consent.

ARTICLE III.

Any person subscribing to the constitution whose name is approved by the executive committee may become a member.

No membership fee nor assessment will be required, but the society shall be dependent upon voluntary contributions for its support.