

FOREWORD

The American vision of itself is of a nation of citizens determining their own destiny; of cultural difference flourishing in an atmosphere of mutual respect; of diverse people shaping their lives and the lives of their children. This subcommittee has undertaken an examination of a major failure in this policy: the education of Indian children. We have chosen a course of learning as obvious as it has been ignored. We have listened to the Indian people speak for themselves about the problems they confront, and about the changes that must be made in seeking effective education for their children.

The responsibility for the education of Indian children is primarily in the hands of the Federal Government. Of the 160,000 Indian children in schools—public, private, mission, and Federal—one-third are in federally operated institutions. In addition, the Federal Government has a substantial responsibility for Indian children enrolled in public schools. Under the Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934, the Secretary of the Interior was authorized to contract with States and other agencies to provide an effective education for Indian children. Last year, more than 68,000 Indian children were covered by this act. We have, moreover, committed ourselves to helping Indian education under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and have included Indian children in the impacted-aid formulas under Public Laws 874 and 815. To a substantial extent, then, the quality and effectiveness of Indian education is a test of this Government's understanding and commitment.

Has the Federal Government lived up to its responsibility? The extensive record of this subcommittee, seven volumes of hearings, five committee prints, and this report, constitute a major indictment of our failure.

Drop-out rates are twice the national average in both public and Federal schools. Some school districts have dropout rates approaching 100 percent;

Achievement levels of Indian children are 2 to 3 years below those of white students; and the Indian child falls progressively further behind the longer he stays in school;

Only 1 percent of Indian children in elementary school have Indian teachers or principals;

One-fourth of elementary and secondary school teachers—*by their own admission*—would prefer *not* to teach Indian children; and

Indian children, more than any other minority group, believe themselves to be "below average" in intelligence.

What are the consequences of our educational failure? What happens to an Indian child who is forced to abandon his own pride and

future and confront a society in which he has been offered neither a place nor a hope? Our failure to provide an effective education for the American Indian has condemned him to a life of poverty and despair.

Fifty thousand Indian families live in unsanitary, dilapidated dwellings, many in huts, shanties, even abandoned automobiles; The average Indian income is \$1,500, 75 percent below the national average;

The unemployment rate among Indians is nearly 40 percent—more than 10 times the national average;

The average age of death of the American Indian is 44 years; for all other Americans it is 65;

The infant mortality rate is twice the national average; and Thousands of Indians have migrated into cities only to find themselves untrained for jobs and unprepared for urban life. Many of them return to the reservation more disillusioned and defeated than when they left.

These cold statistics illuminate a national tragedy and a national disgrace. They demonstrate that the "first American" has become the "last American" in terms of an opportunity for employment, education, a decent income, and the chance for a full and rewarding life.

There are no quick and easy solutions in this tragic state of affairs; but clearly, effective education lies at the heart of any lasting solution. And that education should no longer be one which assumes that cultural differences mean cultural inferiority. The findings and recommendations contained in this report are a call for excellence, a reversal of past failures, and a commitment to a national program and priority for the American Indian equal in importance to the Marshall plan following World War II.

Many people have made major contributions to the work of the subcommittee and its final report. Senator Robert F. Kennedy, Senator Wayne Morse, and Senator Ralph Yarborough have all served as chairman of the subcommittee, and contributed their vision and passionate concern to its endeavors. The subcommittee has benefited greatly from the great interest and good counsel of its members on the minority side.

This has truly been a bipartisan effort which is clearly reflected in the unanimous agreement on 59 out of the 60 subcommittee recommendations.

Despite a series of tragic events and unavoidable delays, the subcommittee has carried out an extensive schedule of field investigations and hearings. It has provided a mandate and a blueprint for change, so that the American Indian can regain his rightful place in our society.

I would particularly like to express my appreciation to the staff director of the subcommittee, Mr. Adrian L. Parmeter, who has served the subcommittee with great commitment and competence from the beginning.

EDWARD M. KENNEDY,

Chairman, Special Subcommittee on Indian Education.

OCTOBER 30, 1969.