

CHALLENGE WEEK 1970

Today we have Earl Baker of the Youth Council Utah, Buster McCurdy from Idapah, Utah, and Earl Livermore for Alcatraz Island in California. As you probably know, a few months ago a group of Indians reclaimed Alcatraz Island from the Federal Government, offering to buy it back for \$24 in beads and trinkets. We are now very happy to, the first speaker will be Earl Livermore, and he will talk about where the Utes are at in relation, particularly to Alcatraz and then we will move to the other two speakers and following his remarks we probably won't have time for too many questions but, immediately following this, there will be a film on the Indian migrant workers, problem here in Utah. This will take place in the Orson Spencer Hall auditorium and these speakers will be there to entertain any questions and just have a kind of a general rap session on the whole problem. But, right now, I present to you, Earl Livermore.

L: I am going to try to be as brief as possible, primarily, because before I came here I thought perhaps, I had a little bit more time. It seems they have assigned the Indians one hour a piece between three people so, I'll have to go as rapidly as possible to tell you a little bit about the inhabitants on the Island of Alcatraz. The occupation of Alcatraz is brought on, not only by dry tension, there are many problems forcing the American Indians both on and off

their reservation. But to offer them a culture and educational complex on the island which has been declared surplus property prior to the occupation; one of these things that brought about the idea of Alcatraz is the fact that the American Indians have been so run down. At that time I was director of the Indian Center and we had a number of gatherings in which the students came upon the idea of occupying Alcatraz, and primarily, because it was occupied at one time in '63 by the students. This was under a..... of surplus property. One of the first things that we did was to draw up a proclamation of what should be made of Alcatraz. The things that were finally decided upon were: A center for Native American Studies, and an Indian Spiritual Center, an Indian Center of Ecology and an American Indian Museum and I think that I'll read briefly the proclamation. The Proclamation states, "To the Great White Father and all his people: We, the Native Americans, reclaim this land known as Alcatraz Island in the name of all American Indians by right of discovery. We wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with the Caucasian inhabitants of this land and hereby offer the following treaty: We will purchase said Alcatraz Island for \$24 in glass beads, a precedent set by White Man's purchase of a single island about three hundred years ago.

We know that \$24 in trade goods for these 16 acres is more than was paid for which Manhattan Island was sold. But we know that land values has risen up over the years. Our offer of \$1.24 per acre is greater than the 47¢ per acre that whiteman are now paying the California Indians for their land. We will give the inhabitants of this land a portion of the land for their own to be held in trust by the American Indian Affairs and by the Bureau of Caucasian Affairs.

"In perpetuity, for as long as the sun shall rise, and the rivers go down to the sea, we will further guide the youth inhabitants of the proper way of living. We will offer them our religion, our education, our right ways, in order to help them to achieve our level of civilization, and thus with them and all their white brothers help them to establish a happy state. And, so this treaty, in good faith, in which to be fair and honorable in our dealings with all white man."

And, it goes on futher, I have, we we are now presently putting out our own news release letter in which this year, I might say, we only put out a very few of them this year. Sort of..... I guess. So, this year I only have a few and it does have the proclamation in it. Some of the problems that came about it was, a tremendous challenge

from the very beginning. In the main we had it set up an office in which we had to take care of the many calls that came throughout the country, the donations, and so we met this challenge by setting up our own office procedures and we had to have boats to take up the supplies to the island. One of the problems in going out to the island was the blockade that was set up by the U.S. Coast Guard and the federal official, most of our food and supply limit had to be ran in midnight or around two or three in the morning. So they were quite surprised to find out after saying there were 80 people that following day and about 120 the following day, because we broke the blockade. And some of the things that were needed was water, we had to bring our own water supply. We had to bring out some gas heaters or whatever, and we had to bring out our own butane tanks for cooking and we also bought our own water tanks and hooked all of these up for hot water for the kitchen and we had to take care of the plumbing facilities, and we had to work on generators to get our electrical supply because of the, it was not fit for over about five years. Some of the things, naturally, we had to try to get organized, some of the things we did in the very beginning was set up details, and this was the cooking and garbage and security and whatever, and then

we finally set up committees, then we needed a governing body. We had meetings practically every morning in which in setting up our governing body we come upon this type of structure. First of all, it was the people that had the voice and then they invested the power in the tri...in the council in which then I was the coordinator, and which helped set up the committees, had public relations, health, security, education, research and development, ways and means, food supply, transportation, administration, and then one of the very first things we did was set up an adhoc emergency committee. These were of non-Indians and Indians both throughout the country. This was a national board in which they were to get non-Indian support throughout the country. We also put up the National Indian Board of Trustees, and these were Indian educators and people that would be well qualified to set up and negotiate toward the federal government. We also had an all Indian Conference, this conference was held December 23. One of the prime reasons was to get ideas from Indian people themselves and just what to do with the islands. We set up committees and we got about our business and had very good constructive ideas in which we can use in our proposals. We set up the legal committee designed by Admissions and qualifications

staff and physical operations finance in over-all aims and goals. Some of the things that came out of this was for example, in the design and layout, the plan for the building and grounds must express the unique purpose that Alcatraz Island is dedicated to the American Indian people locally, especially those who made the landing, and national. The plan will solve the problems of lack of fresh water on the island, its natural limitations, its size, and rock surface and steep terrain etc. Where it is..... leveled off, the plans shall meet the challenge of these problems that is functional, beautiful, original, in concept traditional Indians, yet contemporary. But, we had a number of ideas, but the whole idea was that it would be expressed Indianist. We also expressed the idea, the desire to set up a center of Ecology. And, so we also found with it in the line of our planning as far as transportation, we have electric cars to avoid carbon monoxide, air pollution, and sanitation, chemical garbage disposals and so on and so forth. So, the whole thing was, idea was similar to a small model city, and even the ancient navigation, we have a light house on the island in which we expressed that the design should be in terms of Indians' decor or motif, and a number of things we had cliff dwellings and round houses,

so the whole island would be a culture center and every thing would be in the design of Indianists. So the conference itself, was beautiful, in fact it was rainy weather, and it was dark and dreary and drab, and people that came from all over the country, some from even Alaska, and Canada, and it was beautiful that day in the fact that all these people came and we had our conference in the main cell block which is a real large area where the prisoners have their dining facilities. Then we had set up a....., or we still set up a number of on-going programs. We have set up our own nursery because we have a number of children on the island, and from nine a.m. in the morning we set up our grades from one to seven in the school system. We have approximately 24 children in which we have about three teachers which are accredited. Two with a B.A. degree and one with a master degree. The one with a master's degree is a Ute Indian, and he heads up the educational program. We also have arts and crafts program for the other students, there are some of the children also. And we have four teachers that are teaching arts and crafts. We hope to set up our medical center, primarily, because we are very much concerned with the health hazards and this is one thing that we were afraid of and in fact that the federal

government could use this to move us off at anytime. We have two nurses and we have a staff of doctors that rotate. We also have an Indian woman who is a dietician who helps in the kitchen. We, one of the unique things was the fact that we set up our own radio program, which was in conjunction with the station in Berkeley. This particular program was broadcast down in Los Angeles, on to New York and Canada, and I think one of the unique things was the fact that it was the Indian people who did decide what was to be used on the program. We also, like I say, we set up our own news letter, and there were a number of old automobiles on the island that were pretty well dilapidated and needed repairing. We set up an automotive training program in which we have Indian students working on the automobiles and we have a number of them going. We have a train going which eventually we feel there, we won't be needing, and so this was a good chance for them to get some experience in automotive training. So after less than two months we did set up our Articles and a Corporation by-laws in which we are now incorporated and it is called "Indians of All Tribes Incorporated." We also realized that we needed legal support and we received legal support from Arnold Porter, one of the largest law firms in Washington, D.C. This

is headed by Johnny Pipesmith who is an Indian himself. We also set up a Bay area task force of lawyers. We found that we needed to set up a task force of lawyers in the Bay area because we've had a lot of people in the very beginning. We had people just coming in often on the island and we didn't know who was who so we had to set up a lot of security and passes and whatever. But a lot of people were going in free-lancing and making a lot of money which we weren't seeing anything of, so now one of the committees for one of the lawyers was to work with contracts or any fund-raising or any thing like this; and so the idea was for anyone who wishes to make any or show any film or documentary, or sign a letter of intent, or do any writings, they have to go through the council first and then goes to the lawyers, from there it is brought to the general assembly for final approval. On December 2, 1969, the San Francisco Regional office of the General Service Administration along with the members of the Department of Labor of Adult Education, Welfare, Housing, Urban development and EOC met with the representatives from Alcatraz to determine what in turn assistance can be properly provided by the federal government, to the Indians in establishing a cultural center to meet their needs.

So, we did generate some type of rapport with the federal government and also we are in constant contact with the federal government in our communication to our lawyer back in Washington, D.C. Then, shortly after that the negotiations were transferred from GSA to National Council of Indian Opportunities, primarily, because the landing on Alcatraz, we forced the federal government to take the island of Alcatraz off the market. It was previously up for bids to the board of supervisors who had a special committee set up to dispose of Alcatraz in the City of San Francisco. We then set up, we didn't want to sit around on the island doing nothing, we had a number of people. We began working on proposals. One of the first things was to work on a staffing proposal and we sent this out to private foundations and then our planning proposal which took quite some time. In doing these, we tried to do these as carefully as possible, primarily, to bring the Indian people throughout the country, Indian educators, and make contact with these people and then we submitted this proposal to the National Council on Indian Opportunity. This was submitted February 23, 1970. This was for the amount of three-hundred thousand dollars, (\$300,000) which is primarily for planning. One of the most beautiful things

that came out to the occupation of Alcatraz was the fact that because we have so many problems in the Bay area, and many of the Indians organizations were not really in communications, one thing came about was the fact that all Indian Organizations banded together, primarily, because the federal government want to speak with Indian leaders in the Bay area. So they banded together under one organization called Banac Bay Area Native American Council. And from there the Indians began negotiations with the federal government. Their first meeting with federal officials was February 11, 1970. Among the officials was Robert Robinson, Executive Director of National Council on Indian Opportunity. This council is headed by Vice-president Spiro Agnew. But anyway, the support, we received a lot of support which was beautiful from private citizens, private foundations, Indian organizations, and a lot of Unions supported us. United Auto Workers, Cleaners, and whatever. And United Auto Workers gave us enough people to work on our, help us with some of the generators, and they sent in donations. We have had a number of celebrities on the island, we've had Anthony Quinn previous, he was working on this movie, well, they titled it, "Nobody Loves a Drunken Indian," and boy, I hate that title and well, it just turns me off.