



DRUMMING UP RESENTMENT

The Anti-Indian Movement in Montana

by

The Montana Human Rights Network

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Contents

Introduction	5
The Anti-Indian Movement: Racist to the Core	6
Vertical and Horizontal Integration	7
Flathead Residents Earning Equality (FREE): The Early Years	9
Morphing into MOD	12
The National Stage	14
MOD's Expansion in Montana	16
MOD's Growing Baggage	18
A New Face - ACE	20
Citizens Equal Rights Alliance	22
Wise Use Takes Stand Against Indian Voting Rights	24
Dancing with the Devil: ACE Falls in with White Supremacists	26
Anti-Indian Activists in Legislative Halls	30
A New Era	34
Buffalo Chips in Indian Country: The Concerned Signatories	35
Roland Morris and the "Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy"	38
Controversy Building Beyond 2000	40
The Native American Press/Ojibwe News	42
Conclusion	43
Appendix: Recommendations	44
Index	46

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In the Spring of 1999, I was giving a presentation on employment issues to a vo-tech class at a College of Technology. When I got into affirmative action and explained that such programs were very rare in Montana, except when on or near Indian reservations, a student raised her hand. I could see that I had hit on a hot-button issue when I called on her. "Why is it that we taxpayers have to give Indians money just for being Indians?" she said. I explained the trust relationship tribes often have and compared it to her getting a trust fund set up for her if her grandparents died. She would not hear it. "Those treaties are all outdated, and we ought to change them," she said. When I explained that treaties cannot be amended by only one party, she said, "They're all lazy drunks anyway." After pointing out the racism of her statement, I went on with my presentation. For me, that encounter is representative of the anti-Indian movement: one part confusion about politics, one part lack of knowledge about history and law, all stirred together with plenty of racism. Like the pepper in chili, racism makes the anti-Indian movement distinct from most political movements. Racism is what makes it hot and what defines its character.

Still we wrestle with the racism of the anti-Indian movement. Far too many of us identify racism with images of Grand Dragons of the Ku Klux Klan and goose-stepping, skinhead bullies. When confronted with more subtle racism in the context of community controversy, we balk, "Surely that is not racism." On top of that, those promoting racial bigotry assure us that the issue is not race. "Why some of my best friends. . .," they say. And then they produce a person of color to attest to their lack of prejudice. We find ourselves scratching our heads.

The anti-Indian movement is racist at its core. This is not because it is somehow covertly associated with the Ku Klux Klan or other white supremacist groups, but because of its own clearly articulated goals. We recognize that there are well-intentioned people who are active in the anti-Indian movement who do not perceive themselves or their cause to be racist. Unfortunately, looking at the total picture, we come to a different conclusion.

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Dedication



Lucille Otter

I met Lucille Otter in the winter of 1995. She was almost 80 years old, and a well-known and respected tribal elder. I spent several hours talking with her at her kitchen table about the activity of white supremacist groups and anti-Indian activists on the Flathead Reservation before leaving with a box of files containing papers reaching back to the early 1970s. Those papers provide much of the basis of this report.

Lucille was a consistent and dedicated activist. For years, she was **the** voter registration person on the Flathead Indian Reservation, receiving public recognition for her work from tribal government. She also spearheaded a successful effort to change the name of Mount Harding to Mount Calowahcan. In an interview about the name change, she said, "I always hated the name Mount Harding. He (Harding) was a womanizer and the worst president we had. That's bothered me since I was a kid." She was instrumental in the effort to establish the Kicking Horse Job Corp Center. She led a petition drive to have primary elections for tribal government, received an honorary degree from the Salish and Kootenai College, established a scholarship fund and on and on the list goes.

Anyone could tell from a short conversation with Lucille that she had a deep and personal understanding of her community and the political forces in Indian country. Going through the papers she saved, reading the margin notes, seeing what she underlined and bracketed with exclamation marks, provided a unique insight into her intellect, her passion and her strength. Many people learned a lot from Lucille. We, here at the Montana Human Rights Network, are fortunate to be among them. We dedicate this publication to her.

K.T.

INTRODUCTION

This report is an organizational analysis of the anti-Indian movement in Montana covering the last 30 years. It is intended to give the reader an understanding of how this movement has grown and changed over time in the state. The report does not provide a legal analysis of tribal sovereignty, as the concept applies to specific issues. It is also valuable to keep in mind that anti-Indian groups in Montana over the last 30 years have not been acting in a vacuum. Since the first days covered in this report, men landed on the moon, the Vietnam war ended, Richard Nixon resigned, the Berlin Wall came down, the Republican Party took control of the U.S. Congress, Oklahoma City was bombed and Bill Clinton was impeached. The changes in Indian policy through the U.S. Congress and the courts over this period of time have been profound, consistently expanding the concept of self-determination in Indian



country. The anti-Indian movement has always been affected by trends in the body politic, as well as trends in explicit Indian policy. It is not an island unto itself.

While this report examines the anti-Indian movement during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the movement in America is as old as the arrival of the first Europeans. For long periods of time, the anti-Indian movement successfully advanced a policy of genocide which was embraced by virtually all social and political institutions in the country. The modern anti-Indian movement advocates the continued elimination of Indian people. In this last iteration, the elimination is not by the murder of individuals, but by the termination of their structures of self-governance, the taking of their resources, and by defining them as part of the “rest of the country” through forced assimilation.

Reservation Population in Montana			
Reservation	Indian	Total	Indian Percentage
Blackfeet	7,025	8,549	82%
Crow	4,724	6,370	74%
Flathead	5,130	21,259	24%
Fort Belknap	2,338	2,508	93%
Fort Peck	5,782	10,595	55%
Northern Cheyenne	3,542	3,923	90%
Rocky Boy	1,882	1,954	96%
Total:	30,423	55,158	55%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990)

THE ANTI-INDIAN MOVEMENT: RACIST TO THE CORE

One of the first questions people ask when they become aware of an organized anti-Indian movement is, “Is it racist?” They are seeking a way to understand the movement and place it in the familiar political landscape. The context in which most people place words like racism, prejudice, and discrimination is the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In that context, an oppressed minority, African Americans, sought inclusion, a piece of the pie, equal opportunity and integration.

The struggle for civil rights in Indian country is different. It rests more on sovereignty and autonomy than on inclusion and integration. The legal framework created by the civil rights ac-

tivists of the 1950s and 1960s sought to secure equal treatment within existing institutions and law. Indian rights activists, by and large, seek recognition of their right to develop their own law. Basically, they seek recognition of a right to self-determination. This difference is confusing and gives the anti-Indian movement an advantage in the rhetorical arena.

Anti-Indian activists say they have nothing against Native Americans. They say their complaint is with the system of laws, rules and regulations which govern the relationship between Native American people, tribal members, their non-Indian neighbors and the U.S. government. To be sure, there is a complex set of issues which is unique to the legal status of Indian tribes and other political jurisdictions. These issues are legitimate political issues which must be worked out between governments and individuals. But the fact that the citizens of one of the governments are a cultural group, as well as a political entity, causes these controversies to be charged with racial animus.

Anti-Indian activists use the language of patriotism to portray their disputes with tribes. One often hears that non-Indians living on the reservation are subject to “taxation without representation.” They make lofty arguments about “equal protection under the law” being denied to American citizens who happen to find themselves within the borders of a reservation. Anti-Indian activists complain that whites

are denied rights granted to Indians who belong to the tribe. They complain of jurisdictional confusion, corruption by tribal officials, bureaucratic incompetence and the list goes on. When the issue of racism comes up, they are quick to say their beef is not with Indian people, but with tribal government and federal In-

dian policy. “All men are created equal,” they say. “People ought to be able to disagree about an issue with tribal government without being a racist. Shouldn’t they?”

From issue to issue that is true, but what becomes obvious about the anti-Indian movement is that, consistently over time, these groups have opposed tribal governments’ positions on *all* issues. More importantly, the basis of their disagreement often strikes at the core of the concept of sovereignty. It is here we find the answer to the question of whether the anti-Indian movement is racist. Even if we set aside the racial epithets and affiliations with white supremacist groups which plague anti-Indian groups across the country, the movement is racist at its core. Taken at face value, the anti-Indian movement is a systematic effort to deny legally established rights to a group of people who are identified on the basis of their shared culture, history, religion and tradition. That makes it racist by definition.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I will guarantee the state and the tribe that if I see and catch an Indian officer or FE&P officer on my land, they can expect to not survive. Maybe this sounds like I’m racist and a radical. I’m just a white landowner who has been pushed into a corner by a minority of Indian assholes, dictating to a majority of whites.”

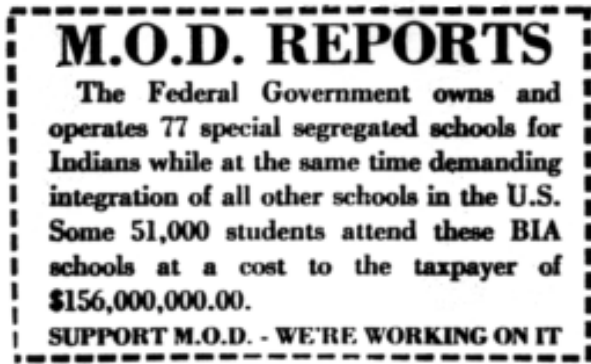
Comment

Public Forum on Flathead Reservation
Hunting and Fishing Agreement
1989

**THE ANTI-INDIAN MOVEMENT:
VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION**

Over the last 30 years, tribal governments have become more sophisticated about asserting themselves through treaty rights. This evolution has often created controversy. Those who have opposed tribes, fearing Indian governance, have coalesced themselves into the anti-Indian movement. Groups like the Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Re-

The history, geography and specific circumstances faced by Montana communities have shaped the anti-Indian organizations in Montana. These groups ebb and flow according to the hot topics of the moment. It is not unusual for a group to disappear only to reconstitute itself, sometimes with a new name and image, around a new controversial issue.

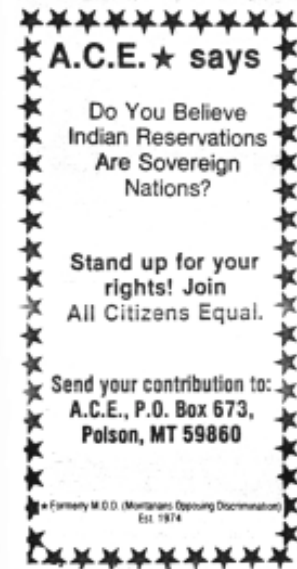


1978 MOD advertisement

The most aggressive anti-Indian activity in Montana has been around the Flathead Reservation in northwest Montana. Because of the General Allotment Act of 1887 and Congressional action in 1908, which opened the reservation to homesteading by non-Indians, the majority of landowners and populace is non-Indian. Further, this reservation contains some of the most spectacular recreational land in the Pacific Northwest, attracting individuals with wealth and political influence to the area.

sponsibilities (ICERR), Totally Equal Americans (TEA), and the Citizens Equal Rights Alliance (CERA) have served as national umbrella organizations for groups that have grown out of local and state controversies. These national groups have focused on federal policy by lobbying in Congress and litigating in the federal courts. However, the power and effectiveness of these national groups are linked to the local anti-Indian groups.

The dominant anti-Indian group in the Flathead area is currently named All Citizens Equal (ACE). ACE has been around in various forms with various names since the 1970s. Its predecessor, Montanans Opposing Discrimination (MOD), had chapters in other areas of the state. ACE activists played a critical role in forming one of the most visible anti-Indian groups at the national level during the late 1970s, the Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities (ICERR). ACE activists also founded a national organization which remains active today, the Citizens Equal Rights Alliance (CERA).



1984 ACE advertisement

In addition to “vertical integration” from local to state to national organizations, the anti-Indian movement also developed “horizontal integration,” or ally relationships, with groups and activists in other political and social movements. The anti-Indian movement is allied with the anti-environmental “wise use movement.” There is extensive cooperation between anti-Indian groups like CERA and wise use groups like the Alliance for America. Loose affiliation between anti-Indian groups and the Religious Right is also evident primarily in the electoral arena and state legislature. Finally, despite their best efforts, anti-Indian activists often stumble into the overt white supremacist movement. It is not a surprising stumble since both movements have racist ideas at the core.

Perhaps no other anti-Indian group demonstrates so clearly that the anti-Indian movement is exactly that -- anti-Indian. Over time, ACE has demonstrated that no matter the issue, it is always opposed to tribal

government. During the last 20 years, its leadership has been part of the compendium of right-wing groups which have dominated politics in the area.

However, while clearly the dominant force, ACE is not the only anti-Indian group in Montana. On the Blackfeet Reservation, there has been a group called the East Slope Taxpayers Association, now called the Concerned Land Owners Association. In southeastern Montana near the Crow Reservation, there is a group called the Citizens Rights Organization (CRO). And, at various times in the last 20 years, there have been local chapters of Montanans Opposing Discrimination (MOD) in Missoula and Poplar.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“The Indian tribes never have been and never will be ‘sovereign nations.’ They cannot support themselves economically nor can they defend their borders. They are pursuing this course to garner as much as they can for free from the American people by preying upon the ill-conceived notion of injustice resulting from the spread of European people across this continent.”

Letter to the Editor
Lake County Leader
February 12, 1996

FLATHEAD RESIDENTS EARNING EQUALITY (FREE): THE EARLY YEARS

During the early 1970s, the tribal government of the Salish and Kootenai Confederated Tribes began charging a \$5.00 fee for a tribal recreation permit. People who had been using the reservation for recreation over the years without paying would now be required to have a permit. Furthermore, the act of obtaining the permits contained an inherent recognition of the tribes' right to administer or regulate the activity of non-Indians on the reservation. Not surprisingly the fee was controversial.

The resentment felt by non-Indian residents gave rise to an organizing effort which resulted in the formation of Flathead Residents Earning Equality (FREE). On May 18, 1972, FREE's board of directors issued a statement of goals and purposes. Saying the group represented over 1,000 concerned citizens of the area, FREE claimed it was "dedicated to preservation of individual rights, both white and Indian." FREE said it would assist in the legal defense of anyone arrested for lacking a tribal permit and urged its members to get arrested. Interested individuals were to contact Del Palmer, the chairman of the board, for more information about joining (*Flathead Courier* 5-18-72). Palmer would become one of the most consistent anti-Indian activists on the Flathead Reservation, holding leadership positions in numerous groups over the next 25 years.

FREE's initial claim of representing 1,000 people was inflated. Three months later, *The Missoulian* reported that FREE had 100 members and none of them were tribal members. A spokesman for the group, Jim Jennings, said the group was conducting a membership drive and requesting dues of \$5.00 per member. Jennings also claimed the tribal fee was unfair because reservation land was developed

FREE
Board of Directors
1972

Del Palmer, Chair
Art Drake, Treasurer
Wayne LeDesky
Hub Beardsley
Ken Mikkelson
Waldo Phillips

with federal funds. Jennings said, "The Tribal Council has not spent a dime of their own money but wants to take \$5.00 from every individual who comes on to the reservation." Jennings added that FREE sought only to "enforce our rights as free men."

But FREE's concerns were more than just the recreation permit. Indeed, as with most anti-Indian groups, the immediate controversy was only a symptom of the real problem.

The real problem was, and still is, the legal status of tribal government, and its unique relationship with surrounding political jurisdictions. While FREE publically tried to remain focused on the recreation fee issue, its chair, Del Palmer, articulated a philosophical analysis on a different

issue, cigarette taxes. In August of 1972, he wrote, "When my wards defy my right to control their actions, I intend to chop off their allowance, and so it is with Indians, selling tax-free cigarettes. If it is not stopped it will surely spread in other areas" (*Flathead Courier* 8-31-72).

This was not the first public proclamation made by Palmer. Several years before, he had made clear his general stance on Indian issues. In *The Mission Valley News* in 1969 he wrote, "Where would the

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"In the interest of equality, perhaps taxation could be introduced in a ratio in direct proportion to a tribal member's non-Indian blood. Certainly his non-Indian blood should feel the guilt and responsibility enough to pay that share in taxes."

Letter to the Editor
Dixon, Montana
June 19, 1980

Indian be today on this reservation had the white man not chosen to come in the beginning and live as white brothers for these many years, under peaceful co-existence? Where would the Indian be if the white man were to disappear? Who would pay the taxes and maintain the entire workings of the reservation?"

FREE also advocated termination of the reservation. "With thousands of acres now under non-Indian status and with more than 90 percent of the population non-Indians, this reservation has long outlived its usefulness," Chairman Palmer wrote. He went on to pose the ultimate question of a people's identity by saying, "With a cost of over \$10,000 per year per capita for Indians, it seems that a definition of Indian is in order since this is taxpayers money." In a subsequent



Del Palmer

letter in the May 25, 1972, *Flathead Courier*, Palmer provided his own definition of "Indian" saying, "I maintain that if one is less than half Indian he is non-Indian." He argued that since "there are only some 86 full bloods on the reservation. . . . the reservation has outlived its intended life span and should now be terminated." To

Palmer, modern day Native American's genetic standing to be considered "Indian" had been so diluted that it was no longer a status he wished to recognize. Naturally, then, he argued granting of political rights through treaties and the reservation system was not appropriate.

Not surprisingly by early 1974, FREE had begun to garner a reputation as being racist and right-wing. At the same time, local controversies continued to spring up. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes pursued legal avenues to expand tribal control in a number of areas, including control over water and its uses. Non-Indian resentment and fear of tribal government also expanded, but that opposition did not translate into increased membership and support for FREE.

On March 27, 1974, a group of people,

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Where would the Indian be today on this reservation had the white man not chosen to come in the beginning and live as white brothers for these many years, under peaceful co-existence? Where would the Indian be if the white man were to disappear? Who would pay the taxes and maintain the entire workings of the reservation?"

Del Palmer
FREE Chair
Mission Valley News

including FREE leadership, met in the Charlo High School cafeteria to discuss various tribal actions and how best to deal with them. The meeting was initially chaired by FREE activist Del Palmer. After calling the meeting to order, Palmer introduced Ronan City Attorney, Lloyd Ingraham. Ingraham began by stating that the intent of the U.S. Congress had always been to terminate the reservation. After summarizing his interpretation of history and current non-Indian concerns on the reservation, the discussion turned to potential solutions. One individual advocated cutting off the commodity distribution program which provided food for low-income Native Americans. Another felt that more funds had to be raised for litigation. The tenor of the meeting was clear. The tribes were getting out of hand and something had to be done.

Finally, discussion turned to FREE itself. FREE board member Waldo Phillips said that the group had spent \$700 on legal briefs and kept about \$1,400

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I maintain that if one is less than half Indian he is non-Indian. There are only some 86 full bloods on the reservation... the reservation has outlived its intended life span and should now be terminated."

Del Palmer
FREE Chair
Flathead Courier

on hand. Phillips went on to say that FREE had about 2,000 members but, because of multiple supporters in households, the actual number of dues-paying members was about 450.

When the discussion turned to strategy, participants acknowledged that the group had been branded a right-wing radical group. Del Palmer suggested FREE would be willing to fold into a bigger organization. Ingraham suggested a name change. Waldo

Phillips suggested a shift in focus to “civil rights.” The group agreed to organize a larger public meeting at Ronan High School the following month. The anti-Indian activists on the Flathead Reservation were about to shed the political baggage accumulated under the name Flathead Residents Earning Equality (FREE) and form a new organization called Montanans Opposing Discrimination (MOD).

MORPHING INTO MOD

The Nixon Administration's rejection of terminating Indian reservations, coupled with U.S. Senate legislation giving land-use planning authority to tribal governments, caused concern among non-Indian residents on the Flathead Reservation. At the state level, the tribes were challenging state taxes levied on the reservation in a number of areas. The tribes were also developing plans for controlling and regulating recreational property along the southern shore of Flathead Lake on the Flathead Reservation. Tension on the Flathead Reservation was running high.

On Thursday April 18, 1974, a capacity crowd of more than 2,500 people filled the gymnasium at the Ronan High School. Palmer, Ingraham and others had carefully staged the meeting to cover a variety of issues concerning non-Indians on the reservation. The speakers were all non-Indian community leaders. The entire meeting was predicated on the idea that tribal government posed a threat to non-Indian landowners. No tribal representatives spoke at the meeting.

The meeting began with Ingraham presenting his view of trends in Indian Law and private property rights. Following a reference to Senator Lee Metcalf's support of planning and zoning authority by tribal government, Ingraham drew loud applause when he said he ceased to be a Democrat as far as Lee Metcalf was concerned.

Local leaders addressing specific issues included: Lake County Commissioner Bill Burley; Phil Maxwell, president of Ronan's water company; Everitt Foust of the Mission Valley Irrigation District; and John Cochrane of the Flathead Lakers, an association of people who owned property on the shore of Flathead lake.

Toward the end of the evening, discussion turned

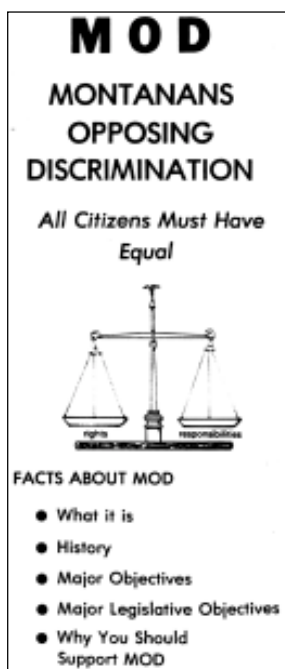
MOD
Board of Directors
1974

F.A. Langston
Bud Zemple
Wes Leishman
Red McDaniels
Wade Vincent
Richard Green
John French
Paul Lindburg
Allen McCoy
Cal Hubbard
Bob Lambeth
Clyde Tompkins

to organizing. Just as he had in the smaller meeting one month before, Del Palmer of FREE said his organization, which he claimed had 2,000 members, might be willing to join forces with a larger "non-partisan, non-racial organization" (*Ronan Pioneer* 4-18-74). Perhaps the clearest indication of the quiet organizing efforts preceding the meeting came when the discussion turned to fund raising. Anti-Indian activist Dick Green explained that a fund had been established and contributions could be given at numerous local banks. That fund already held an estimated \$11,000. By any measure, the organizational meeting of Montanans Opposing Discrimination (MOD) was a resounding success.

Approximately one month later, 700 people met to adopt bylaws and elect officers for MOD. Ingraham started the meeting with more legal analysis of tribal status. In his presentation, Ingraham argued that the self-determination for Native Americans promoted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs was not appropriate. He argued that tribal councils could only make decisions with the approval of the BIA.

After Ingraham spoke, Del Palmer ran the meeting, calling for a unanimous voice vote on the individuals nominated to the board of directors. After the voting, Palmer concluded his portion of the meet-



MOD Flyer

ing saying that the only solution to all of the problems facing the community was termination of the reservation.

Following the election of directors, a female audience member pointed out that no women had been elected and asked why. This question caused laughter in the audience, but obtained no response. The board remained solidly male. That night the newly elected board selected their officers: Chairman Bud Zemple, Vice-Chair Vic Starkel and Treasurer Paul Lindburg. Along with additional pledges, \$3,000 was collected at the door.

With these two meetings, MOD was born. Over its lifetime, MOD would be a major player in the anti-Indian movement. It would participate in the formation of both national anti-Indian networks and groups in Montana. Throughout its existence, MOD would struggle with a racist image. In its formation in 1974, one sees the truth in the charge. Del Palmer pushed for termination of the reservation, and Lloyd Ingraham stated that the concept of Indian self-termination was flawed. These positions are not



Notice for MOD's 1975 Annual Meeting

about hunting rights, water rights or lake shore protection. They are not even about federal "Indian Policy." They are about whether or not a group of people, united by culture, heritage and tradition, have a right to self-determination already secured in treaties with the U.S. Government. In the final analysis, the 2,500 people who came together in the Ronan gymnasium that night were united in their fear of, and anger at, the sovereignty of Indian people.

THE NATIONAL STAGE

The conditions giving rise to the formation of MOD were not unique to Montana. In Washington State, similar things were happening. In the mid-1970s, then Washington State Attorney General Slade Gorton was making a name for himself litigating and



Sen. Slade
Gorton
(R-WA)

losing a variety of cases surrounding Indian issues (*The Anti-Indian Movement on the Tribal Frontier*, Center For World Indigenous Studies, Rudy Ryser, 1992). Gorton carried his hostility towards Indian people from the Attorney General's Office to his seat in the U.S. Senate.

At the same time, Washington State Senator Jack Metcalf was focusing his political efforts against a recent federal court decision recognizing tribal treaty fishing rights. In the process, he became aware of the growing anti-Indian movement in other areas of the country (*The Anti-Indian Movement on the Tribal Frontier*). Metcalf would go on to make a name for himself as an anti-Indian activist, serving on the board of Salmon/Steelhead Preservation Action For Washington Now (S/SPAWN). When that group died, he joined United Property Owners of Washington (UPOW). Metcalf, who is now a congressman, has also come to fully embrace a wide array of far right-wing ideology (*Dignity Report*, Coalition for Human Dignity, Winter 1998).



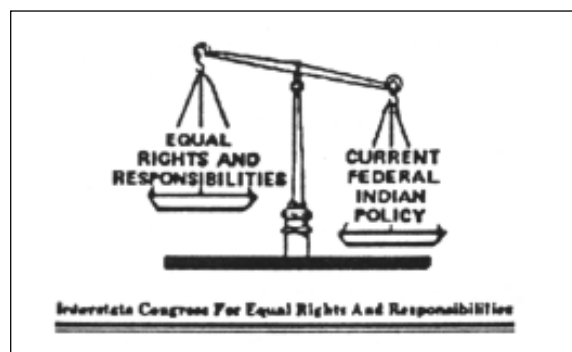
Rep. Jack
Metcalf
(R-WA)

Thanks to Gorton, Metcalf and others in Washington State, issues surrounding treaty rights and tribal sovereignty were creating a great deal of controversy during the mid-1970s. In that environment, the Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities (ICERR) was formed. The primary activist behind this group was Howard Gray, an outdoor writer and photographer based in Seattle. Gray had plenty to work with in forming a national anti-Indian group. Similar controversy was brewing in other western and mid-western states. While the specific issue differed in each locality, the underlying principle was the same. Tribes were becoming better organized about asserting their sovereign status by defining and securing treaty rights

through litigation and the U.S. Congress.

While Gray was organizing and promoting ICERR, MOD was reaching out to people in South Dakota. Its annual meeting notice in May of 1975 announced a delegation of concerned individuals from South Dakota would be attending the meeting. The list included Jack Freeman of Faith, South Dakota, identified as a board member of a group called Civil Liberties for South Dakota Citizens. Freeman would go on to become the President of ICERR. A little more than a year later, in an open letter published in the *Ronan Press* on July 7, 1976, ICERR's directors claimed that MOD had emerged as the motivating force behind ICERR. MOD described ICERR as a coalition of 13 state organizations.

MOD members and activists remained involved with ICERR for years. ICERR's articles of incorpo-



ICERR Graphic

ration show F.W. Rockwell of St. Ignatius as a board member. One year later, Rockwell was also serving on the board of MOD. ICERR helped provide program activities for MOD as well. In September 1976, ICERR Board Chair Jack Freeman was a featured speaker at a MOD meeting in Wolf Point. In 1978, the ICERR chair met with MOD's board.

ICERR helped refine the anti-Indian movement's message, making it more sophisticated in several important ways. First, it portrayed tribal members as "super citizens" enjoying rights above the rest of the populace. Defining a group of people as separate and threatening is the first step in scapegoating which has become one of the anti-Indian movement's hallmarks. In addition, ICERR continued the trend of casting anti-Indian groups as non-Indian civil rights organizations.

Second, through ICERR and its affiliated state groups, the anti-Indian movement continued to carve out a place in right-wing politics. The underlying anti-federal thrust of these groups fits the far-right, conspiracy-driven worldview like a glove. During this same period of time, groups like the Posse Comitatus appeared in many of the same communities, spreading anti-Semitic and anti-federal conspiracy propaganda. It was no great leap to place tribal government in the panoply of threats posed by government power. An interesting example is a November 1977 letter to the *Ronan Pioneer* from “Marshal” Slim Deardorff of the Posse Comitatus. Deardorff said,



Posse Comitatus logo

“the Posse Comitatus wishes to go on public record as stating that we will not, under any circumstances, submit to any unconstitutional act attempting to be perpetrated against us by anyone, be they federal, local or tribal officers.” By the 1990s, Deardorff had become a “Reverend” in one of the most virulent white supremacist groups in the country, the World Church of the Creator.

In addition to that ideological overlay, the rhetoric of the anti-Indian movement mirrored the themes of the Sagebrush Rebellion of the 1980s and the wise use movement of the 1990s. In July 1978, Blair Richendifer, the executive director of ICERR, met with the MOD board in Polson. He told the group

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Photo by Ron Wheeler



“Therefore the Posse Comitatus wishes to go on public record as stating we will not under any circumstances submit to any unconstitutional acts attempting to be perpetrated against us by anyone, be they federal, local or tribal officers.”

Posse Comitatus
 “Marshal” Slim Deardorff
Pioneer Courier
 November 9, 1977

that involving county commissioners was critical. “Basically whether the commissioners realize it or not, if the tribal advocates get everything they want, there may be no need for county government in reservation areas,” he said. That rhetoric was a precursor to the far-right county supremacy movement of the 1990s that advocated controlling federally administered land by adopting local ordinances.

In addition to its emphasis on “non-Indian civil rights,” the propaganda of the anti-Indian movement, even at these relatively early stages, was anti-federal government and pro-property rights. It was a casting which, over time, would lead to alliances with other right-wing groups within the so-called wise use movement and loose associations with the white supremacist movement.

MOD’S EXPANSION IN MONTANA

By the summer of 1976, MOD had an office in Polson open three days a week. That August, MOD members and others met in Great Falls to form a state-wide group. Once again the primary presenter was Ronan City Attorney Lloyd Ingraham, who was retained as MOD’s legal counsel. A month later Ingraham and three MOD directors flew to Wolf Point to help organize a chapter around the Fort Peck Reservation. Jack Freeman, ICERR president, was the speaker at that meeting.

The Wolf Point MOD chapter grew out of the Fort Peck Grazing Association, which had decided to alert non-Indians to jurisdictional issues they faced while living on an Indian reservation. Shortly thereafter, the Fort Peck Grazing Association folded into the Wolf Point Chapter of MOD. This chapter was far more focused on agricultural issues than the Ronan MOD group. In July of 1977, the president of Wolf Point’s MOD chapter was Richard Reid, a rancher from Poplar and subsequent president of ICERR (*Ronan Pioneer* 4-5-78). Reflecting the more agricultural focus of the Wolf Point Chapter, Reid said that MOD hoped to reach out to groups like the State Grange Association, Farm Bureau and Montana Stockgrowers Association. In his public statements, Reid sought to portray the effectiveness of the local chapter. “The strength of MOD and ICERR is being felt,” he said.

During this time, the U.S. Justice Department was scrutinizing ICERR and Wolf Point’s MOD chapter. In early 1977, the anti-Indian movement had been recommended for investigation by the Montana and South Dakota Advisory Committees to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. In reporting the potential

**MOD Board of Directors
Wolf Point Chapter
1977**

Richard Reid, Chair
Joel Eggebrecht, Vice chair
David Sage, Treasurer
Nancy Rathert
Lloyd Holden
Kenny Sage
Willie Lockman
Richard Wagner
Dallas O’Connor
Tom Scott
John Stensiand

investigation, Wolf Point’s *The Herald News* identified its sources as Department of Justice staffer William Muldrow and Washington, D.C., attorney Roger Finzel. *The Herald News* quoted Finzel as saying, “the commission may look into allegations that there are groups with ties to right-wing or anti-democratic organizations that are trying to gain power over Indian people or trying to deny them their civil rights.” The article said that Finzel was referring specifically to MOD and ICERR.

Describing ICERR as the “Interstate Congress of Rednecks,” Fort Peck Tribal board member Caleb Shields said that he was glad MOD and ICERR were being targeted for investigation. After saying that the anti-Indian movement was motivated by greed for more land, Shields alleged that these groups engaged in subversive paramilitary activities. Though the charge was never confirmed, it added to MOD’s image as a radical right-wing group.

MOD was obviously furious at the allegations made by Shields. MOD Chair Reid subsequently used the charges as a basis to refuse discussing issues with the Fort Peck Tribal Council. In rejecting a request from the tribal council, Reid said, “If the Tribal board and chairman are sincere about this future meeting, our feeling is that they would have to publically retract those statements.” Although MOD and ICERR ended up not being targeted by the commission for investigation, the media attention lent

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“The commission may look into allegations that there are groups with ties to right-wing or anti-democratic organizations that are trying to gain power over Indian people or trying to deny them civil rights.”

Roger Finzel
The Herald News
1977

credibility to charges of racism (*Herald News* 2-20-77).

In October of 1977, the Wolf Point Chapter of MOD brought in Burt Wolf, president of the Citizen’s League for Civil Rights, out of Stone Lake, WI. Wolf gave a speech that night which left little doubt about the fundamental beliefs of the anti-Indian movement. Arguing for termination of reservations, he described the reservation system as the “root of genocide” and said that the federal government recognizes a tribal government “which to us is socialistic.” Reid then took the podium and announced, “We are unalterably opposed to Indian sovereignty.”

At the same meeting, the chapter treasurer reported that the Fort Peck group had collected over \$17,000 since its inception in 1975. More than 150 local members attended the meeting.

By 1978, the Wolf Point Chapter of MOD was well established. Reid had proven himself in Montana and nationally as a leader in the anti-Indian movement. He was president of ICERR and of the Wolf Point’s MOD chapter. The work toward linking with groups and individuals in other areas was also continuing. In a letter to Ronan’s *Mission Valley News*, Reid explained that groups had organized in Montana and come together in MOD-CRO.

Though the reference “MOD-CRO” seems out of place in this context, it is likely the acronym CRO refers to a group active around the Crow Reservation called the Citizen’s Rights Organization headed up by Lodge Grass area rancher Hale Jeffers. This group has always been a bit player in the larger Montana picture. Jeffers has sat on the board of national

organizations giving them the “credibility” of representing a diverse geographic sphere.

MOD was also developing greater organizational sophistication, restructuring itself to facilitate local involvement through chapters. It developed strong connections with other groups, making it an important player in the anti-Indian movement at the national level. It also became quite aggressive in its recruitment tactics. As an example, MOD went through property records in Lake County to find individuals who owned property around Flathead Lake. About 500 individuals were then invited to a meeting to discuss possible tribal actions that would effect dock permits and

other uses of Flathead Lake’s southern half. Many of the attendees living in Missoula responded by forming a Missoula MOD chapter on March 20, 1978.

True to form, the Missoula organizational meeting was run by Lloyd Ingraham. Ingraham was accompanied by MOD board member John Cochrane, who had been involved in the formation of MOD and also served on the board of the Flathead Lakers, which was predominantly comprised of property owners around Flathead Lake. In

later years, the Flathead Lakers began working with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, renouncing any ties to racist groups. Three people were selected to act as initial directors of the Missoula chapter. They were: Lynne Jolliffe, Dr. Harvey Raykowski and Ralph Marchildon. In an interview with the *Missoulian*, Jolliffe said, “It’s not a case of fighting Indians. It’s a case of feeling we’re being discriminated against” (*Missoulian* 3-20-78).

**MOD Board of Directors
Missoula Chapter
1978**

Lynne Jolliffe
Dr. Harvey Raykowski
Ralph Marchildon

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“The Indians are conquered people and I don’t owe any of you anything.”

Letter to the Editor
Ronan Pioneer
May 10, 1990

MOD's GROWING BAGGAGE

With its increased organizational sophistication, greater presence in the media and allies in the political arena, MOD also accumulated political baggage and a well-deserved reputation for right-wing politics. While decrying the label “racist” as unfair and inaccurate, MOD continued to distribute information and make statements which revealed its racist leanings. As an example, one MOD flyer declared, “The liberal treatment of minorities at the expense of taxpayers has reached astronomical proportions” under bold letters declaring, “Why You Should Support MOD.” By 1977, critics were referring to MOD as Montanans Organizing *Discrimination*.

In August of 1977, one of the major daily papers in the state, *The Missoulian*, put the issue of MOD's racism squarely on the table. The August 23 editorial questioned MOD's patriotic spirit and proclaimed affection for Native Americans. It referred to MOD supporters as a bunch of timid rednecks who loathed Indians governing themselves. The editor, Larry Elkin, minced no words, “Why is MOD racist?” he asked. “Because it plays on, and encourages, white fear of Indian government—not because the governing itself would be bad, but because it would be done by non-whites.”

Responding to the editorial fell to newly elected MOD President Wade Vincent, who, in conjunction with the rest of the board, sought to control the damage by writing an editorial response. Vincent's response focused on treaty relationships and MOD's opposition to the concept of sovereignty. Even in this piece, which most would expect to be quite circumspect, Vincent argued that Indians had received everything they deserved when the reservation had been opened to homesteading by non-Indians. In essence, MOD was attempting to argue that Indian people had received a fair deal. This statement was grossly incongruent with the historical reality of Indian treaties. The result was that MOD reinforced the premise of *The Missoulian* editorial.

By 1979, MOD was concerned about its declining influence. At its annual meeting in April, MOD invited “tell-it-like-it-is” media personality George Ostrom as the featured speaker. Ostrom was the pub-



Photo Courtesy of The Lake County Leader.

George Ostrom addresses MOD in 1979.

lisher of *The Kalispell Weekly News* at that time and went on to become a radio announcer in the Kalispell area. Despite its efforts to promote the event with advertisements, only about 120 people turned out. In addition, the treasurer of the group warned that, due to extraordinary expenses in 1978, the group had only about \$8,000 in the bank.

Despite relatively low attendance and concern about financial problems, the MOD crowd warmed to the main event. Ostrom, wearing a three-piece suit and a moustache and goatee reminiscent of George Armstrong Custer, regaled the audience with anecdotes about overbearing government agencies. On the topic of Indian policy, Ostrom contended that federal policy had deprived Indians, as well as non-Indians, of self-respect. Along that vein, Ostrom contended that the Hellgate Treaty “was between the U.S. Government and the aborigines, not between a half Kootenai and a half Norwegian.” Ostrom received a standing ovation (*Ronan Pioneer* 4-4-79).

The period from 1978 to 1982 marked organizational decline. MOD had formed in the Ronan gymnasium with 2,500 people in attendance. By 1982,

meetings were attracting far fewer people. Nonetheless, MOD was still a very influential group. MOD continued its activity on a number of issues. For example, it opposed Indian education requirements for Montana teachers and tribal law enforcement of air-quality standards on the reservation. In the early 1980s, MOD remained the strongest voice of the anti-Indian movement in Montana.

In December 1982, Del Palmer, now a MOD board member, wrote a letter to the *Mission Valley News* defending MOD and protesting an article portraying MOD as having lost energy. Palmer objected to the characterization, saying that MOD was stronger than ever. The former

Chair of FREE and founder of MOD explained that recent difficulties in recruiting leadership for MOD were a result of “the ever increasing hassle by certain minority groups trying to gain control in one form or other over non-members and their property.” In such a hostile environment, leadership had become a full-time job.

Though Palmer had not held leadership positions with MOD until 1980, he was never far from MOD. Palmer’s connections to MOD were not just informal. As far back as 1975, Palmer had received write-in votes in MOD board elections, even though he was not one of the names suggested by the nominating committee. By 1980, Palmer had joined the board.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“The tribes are not pure Indians now. They are half-breeds and less than that. If non-Indians had not settled the lands that the government opened it would be as barren as ever.”

Letter to the Editor
Pioneer Courier
May 19, 1982

A NEW FACE - ACE

In the early 1980s, MOD was in a period of self-evaluation and reflection. It needed to find the best way to increase its influence and effectiveness. It had demonstrated its clout at the national level by working with and through ICERR. On the other hand, MOD's image was tarnished with a widely held perception as racist and right-wing. One factor in its favor was that the issues which gave birth to the organization continued to be matters of public concern. But some of the leadership felt the group was stagnating. As is often the temptation in any activist group, the group settled on a media/message solution.

A little less than four years after he had entertained MOD with his wry wit and clever rhetoric, George Ostrom, the former publisher of *The Kalispell Weekly News*, was hired to be the executive director of MOD. The announcement was made on January 5, 1983, by MOD Chair Leroy Lake. He said staff was needed to help counter the "discriminatory self-serving and often contradictory policies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs."

A little less than three months later in March of 1983, Ostrom announced that MOD was changing its name to All Citizens Equal (ACE). According to Ostrom, the group wanted to take the word "Opposing" out of its name. In addition, Ostrom said the group wanted to expand into other states and the old name would no longer apply. Board Chair Leroy Lake made it obvious that the name change would also distance the group from its past image, saying, "Now we feel it's time to create a more positive and accurate image."

ACE's ambitions to become a national organization never materialized. Despite Ostrom's push to go national and the need to create a more positive image, the organization continued along the same path. As a result, Ostrom's tenure at ACE proved to

ACE
Board of Directors
1983

Roy Lake, President
Luella Roller, Vice President
Shirley Jacobson, Treasurer
Kermit Anderson
C.L. Aplin
Earl Coriell
Phil Maxwell
W.E. McDaniel
Nilah Miller
Earl Mutchler
Del Palmer
Wayne Rockwell

be short lived. Ostrom told the Montana Human Rights Network in October of 1999 that he had been brought in to save a sinking ship. He said he left because some of the leaders were just too hard core. "To some of them, the only good Indian was a dead Indian," he said.

Much of the infrastructure created over the previous 10 years was deteriorating. The other MOD chapters never changed their names to ACE, reflecting a lack of commitment to the new core group on the Flathead Reservation. Other than the chapter in Wolf Point, the local groups appeared to do little more than lend

credence to the more aggressive activism growing out of ACE and ICERR. A similar dynamic occurred at the national level with the withering of ICERR and the rise of a group called Totally Equal Americans (TEA).

By ACE's 1985 annual meeting, leadership was dispirited. Looking out at a crowd of some 70 people, John Cochrane, the current chair, reflected that MOD had been founded at a meeting of 2,500 people in the Ronan school. He said, "What I'd like to know now is where are all these people?" Lake County Commissioner and long-time supporter, Mike Hutchin, answered that ACE had a racist image. He said, "I think the press is basically uneducated, and I think the press is biased." He concluded, "Don't be ashamed to be a member of ACE."

Also at this meeting were two representatives from Totally Equal Americans (TEA), as well as

East Slope Taxpayers Association
Board of Directors
1984

Kay Hoyt, President
Ralph Johnson, Vice President
Mary Lee Jacobsen, Secretary
Richard Greenshields, Treasurer

Mary Lee Jacobsen, an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe and the secretary of Browning's anti-Indian group, East Slope Taxpayers Association. Jacobsen told the group that the Blackfeet Tribe had done everything it could to put people out of business by badgering and threatening them. An Indian woman in the audience, named Vi McClure, bluntly confronted Jacobsen, saying, "What you say is colorful, very colorful. But I don't believe it's the truth" (*Flathead Courier* 4-4-85).

Population Breakdown	
Montana population:	799,065
Indian population:	47,679
Indian Percentage of total population:	5.97%
Percentage of Indians living on reservations:	63.8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990)

CITIZENS EQUAL RIGHTS ALLIANCE

As ACE shrank and retreated into a smaller core of committed activists, it was still unable to shake the perception that it was a racist organization. In 1988, Bill Covey of Big Arm was elected to the board of ACE. Covey's tenure with ACE proved to be short lived, but his rise in the organization is indicative of how difficult it was to recruit and retain new leadership. In 1989, Covey was elected board chair. By 1990, he was no longer on the board. Covey brought a more sophisticated approach to activism that could have been beneficial to ACE. He proved to be very sensitive to the charge of racism and more adept at handling this issue than other ACE leaders.

But Covey obviously had his sights on the national arena. In a 1989 ACE Newsletter, Covey wrote that ACE was one of many anti-Indian groups to attend a national convention in Wisconsin. In this newsletter, Covey announced the formation of a "new" group, the Citizens Equal Rights Alliance (CERA). Covey wrote, "At the convention, a national organization designed to work on the issues

Payers Association, and Hale Jeffers of the Citizens Rights Organization.

Through 1992, the mailing address for this national organization was Bill Covey's address. During this time, he was also responsible for producing *CERA News*, a two to four-page newsletter for the organization. In 1993, Jim Mitchell of New Mexico was elected chair, and the address of the organization moved with him.



CERA's logo complete with Bill Covey's address

Over time, CERA moved the anti-Indian

movement in several important tactical directions. First CERA has been very careful to keep its focus on narrowly defined issues at the national level. This focus has enabled CERA to avoid broad proclamations about the status of Indian people and tribal government. Instead, CERA tends to pinpoint specific legislation and litigation, often in the context of property rights. Though the underlying principles always come back to the central issue of Indian self-determination, the focus on legal minutia has largely enabled the group to downplay charges of racism.

Secondly, CERA has moved the anti-Indian movement firmly into the ranks of the anti-environmental wise use movement. CERA's focus on property rights, combined with the fact that the anti-Indian

movement is fundamentally anti-federal, it is ideologically allied with wise use groups.

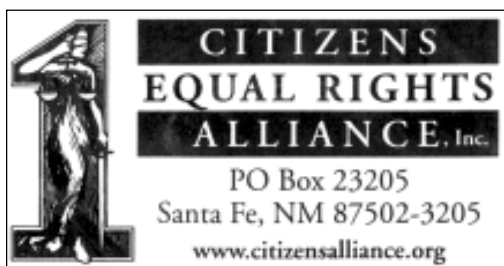
But the ties between CERA and wise use groups is more than an ideological similarity. In 1995, Montana-based wise use activist Bruce Vincent conducted an organizing meeting for Alliance for America in Ronan. Alliance for America is a national wise use organization. Vincent was president of the group at the time. In 1996, CERA scheduled its board meeting to coincide with the meeting of

ROLAND MORRIS PICTURED WITH CERA'S FLY IN FOR AMERICA DELEGATION



Butch Tongate Charlotte Mitchell Darrel Smith Frank Courteau Wally Pheiffer Jim Mitchell Charles Keogh Vincent Hill Lana Marcussen Roland Morris Howard Hanson

was made public." He went on to explain the purpose of the group as being "information and education." Covey's choice of words indicates that the formation and organizational work to form CERA had been going on for some time, and the group was largely in place. Indeed, CERA had formed earlier, and Bill Covey was already the president. His wife, Ruby Gene, was the secretary/treasurer (*CERA News* 8-89). Also on the CERA's board at that time were Montanans Mary Lee Jacobsen of the East Slope Tax



CERA's 1999 logo



Alliance for America's 1999 logo

the Alliance for America. In June of 1997 and 1998, CERA continued scheduling its board meeting in conjunction with the Alliance's "Fly In for America." This Alliance program was aimed at lobbying the U.S. Congress on a number of issues.

An article titled "Washington Highlights" in *CERA News*' September 1996 issue makes clear that the connection between anti-Indian and wise use activism is embraced by the organization. The article states, "Discussion with other Alliance members revealed that many of those in attendance have problems with tribal governments, as well as with the federal government and environmental groups."

Alliance for America isn't the only wise use organization that's taking an interest in Indian issues in Montana. The Mountain States Legal Foundation, the topic of the next section, has taken up arms against Indian voting rights in Eastern Montana.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"The wise use movement is a cleverly crafted network of supposedly grass-roots-based organizations purporting to promote the wise use of our natural resources. In reality, although many good local citizens are involved, the driving force behind the movement was spawned by politically conservative individuals with close ties to corporate and right-wing agendas."

Don Judge
 AFL-CIO Executive Director
 January 2000

MOUNTAIN STATES LEGAL FOUNDATION: WISE USE TAKES STAND AGAINST INDIAN VOTING RIGHTS

In the fall of 1999, the U.S. Justice Department filed suit against Blaine County which partly includes the Fort Belknap Reservation. The suit alleged that the at-large election of county commissioners violates the federal voting rights act and results in discrimination against Native Americans in county commission elections. These suits are not new in Montana. Several similar suits have been litigated, others settled, and yet others pending in the legal system.

What is unique about the Blaine County case is that after settlement discussions were underway between county and U.S. Justice Department officials, the county was contacted by a wise use group called the Mountain States Legal Foundation. The Foundation offered to represent the county without charging legal fees. It is apparent this group seeks to litigate cases for political purposes, carefully choosing cases to effect changes in public policy.

The Mountain States Legal Foundation was founded in 1976 with former Reagan Interior Secretary James Watt as its first president. The group has

been a central player in the wise use movement throughout the 1990s. Focusing primarily on the judicial arena, this group says that it is dedicated to individual liberty, the right to own and use property, limited government and the free enterprise system. Its board of directors is predominated by individuals with direct interest in large corporations and extractive resource industries.

While Mountain States Legal Foundation is not generally associated with race issues, the Blaine County case is not its first venture into race politics. It has also been involved in cases challenging minority contracting rules at the state and federal levels. Nor is this its first case involving Indian issues. Mountain States Legal Foundation also joined a case against the National Park Service challenging the Park Service's decision to close the Devil's Tower National Monument in Wyoming to restrict public access during certain times of the year to allow Native American spiritual observances.

This case provides an example of the political mathematics which binds the anti-Indian and wise

The Wise Use Movement

Founded in 1988, the wise use movement is a grassroots component of the national anti-environmental movement. Thousands of local organizations dealing with everything from ranching and mining to motorized recreation and property rights fit under the wise-use umbrella funded largely by corporate money. The movement combines all of these local concerns and movements into a national one. Whereas representatives of the national anti-environmental movement fight in the halls of Congress using legislation, local activists often use hostile words and physical intimidation to "free" all federally-owned land. In their view, the federal government is an absentee landlord at best, or a vengeful entity trying to steal their way of life. In either case, land must be privatized.

Wise use activists have co-opted the persona of the rancher, the farmer and the miner. In their view, the government is the great persecutor. Not surprisingly, this message of martyrdom has helped the movement and its corporate backers capitalize on the difficult times facing workers in extraction industries. It claims that

true environmentalists gain their knowledge by working the land. To fulfill the environment's potential, all land needs to be utilized. In order for this to happen, all environmental regulations must cease. Wise use activists believe that the government has been taken over by the "greens." Since environmentalists are portrayed as pagans who put nature before economic prosperity and stability, federal employees become scapegoats and targets.

Extraction-based industries, such as mining and timber, have always been important wise use issues. However, as property rights and takings legislation entered into the political scene, wise use discovered hot-button issues that were effective recruiting tools.

In the early 1990s, the Montana Human Rights Network was aware of the wise use movement but viewed it as essentially a corporately funded effort to open public lands to development by big timber and mining companies. Its only political philosophy appeared to be thinly veiled attempts to purchase grassroots activism, and

(continued on page 25)

**Mountain States Legal Foundation
Montana Board Members**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thomas Hauptman

President of KHG Operating Company

David McClure

President of Montana Farm Bureau

David Rovig

President of Greystar Resources and
Brimstone Gold Corporation

DIRECTORS EMERITI

Tim Babcock

former Montana Governor and President of Sterling Mining

John “Jack” Burke

former Vice President of Montana Power Company

use movements together. On one side of the equation is the wise use movement with its adulation of individual property rights and antipathy toward federal authority combined with its access to power through its corporate sponsors. On the other are Indian tribes expanding their influence through the federal government (treaty rights) and laying claim to the natural resource base found on reservations across the country, virtually assuring a change in the nature (and certainly beneficiaries) of development. Given those dynamics, it is no surprise that wise use groups enter mutually supportive relationships with organized anti-Indian groups.

**Wise Use Movement
continued from page 24**

(continued from page 24)

MHRN did not initially invest much effort in examining it in Montana.

However, as issues surrounding private property rights came into the picture, MHRN began to see disturbing coalitions forming. These coalitions involved traditional wise use activists with members of the burgeoning militia movement. Property rights issues hit a responsive chord among small property owners. In this case, the wise use movement was creating a reactionary movement opposed to land use planning and regulation at the grassroots level. The central argument of wise use activists in this arena was the concept of “regulatory takings” (government regulation rendering private property worthless by taking some action which restricts its use) combined with the concept of home rule or county supremacy. Wise use activists promoted the idea that county government had sole authority over all lands in its political boundaries. This included federal land. This turned county government into a common battlefield for wise use issues.

Far-right elements from the militia movement and white supremacist groups found themselves at home in these county-based controversies. Since the late 1960s, far-right groups like the Posse Comitatus had been combining white supremacy with visceral hatred for federal

authority and promoting the power of the county. In the 1990s, this ideology was recycled and repackaged by Freeman and militia activists to fit current circumstances. At the local level, MHRN saw the lines blurring between wise use, racist right, and other anti-federal government groups, including religious right groups like the Christian Coalition.

Based on its experience working in local communities, MHRN concluded that these local coalitions were organic in nature. Most often they were not the result of conscious coalition building orchestrated by group leaders. Rather, they resulted from commonly held values which were easily applicable to the local controversies. Those values include: individualism, anti-government/anti-federal sentiment, free market capitalism, and a traditional view of America as a white, Christian, patriarchal nation.

Given these themes of the wise use movement, it is not hard to see why it might embrace anti-Indian groups. The ties between the Citizens Equal Rights Alliance and the Alliance for America are well established and mutually beneficial. As anti-Indian sentiment is brought to the fore by politicians like Slade Gorton and Conrad Burns, national wise use groups, like the Mountain States Legal Foundation, will continue their involvement.

DANCING WITH THE DEVIL: ACE FALLS IN WITH WHITE SUPREMACISTS

ACE
Board of Directors
1989

William Covey, President
Luella Roller, Vice President
Shirley Jacobson, Secretary
Nilah Miller, Treasurer
Diane Montieth
John Cramer

The anti-Indian movement has been able to befuddle many people about whether or not it is racist. In large part, this is because the media and other community institutions define racism by stereotypes of the Ku Klux Klan and other hard-core white supremacists. The racism of the anti-Indian movement is different from that of the Ku Klux Klan. It blends traditional elements of racism (stereotypic assumptions, bigotry, etc.) with a host of legitimate political issues. Furthermore, where most white supremacist organizations are expressly and overtly racist, anti-Indian groups usually deny racist motives and often prohibit racism in their propaganda. Still, because it is a racist movement at its core, it attracts openly white supremacist individuals. Over time, some members and leaders of anti-Indian groups have demonstrated that they share the white supremacist movement's ideology. At the same time, overtly white supremacist activists have aligned themselves with, and participated in, anti-Indian groups.

By 1989, ACE was the only active anti-Indian organization in Montana. Representatives of the East Slope Taxpayers Association testified at the legislature, but never developed a base of support beyond four to five founding members. The various MOD chapters had died out. The Citizens Rights Organization (CRO) near Lodge Grass also failed to build a base of support. CERA was active, but not focused on community-level work, preferring to focus its activities on the national stage.

On the Flathead Reservation, an increasing number of non-Indians were concerned that ACE provided the only non-Indian voice on Indian issues. These individuals were not hostile to tribal govern-

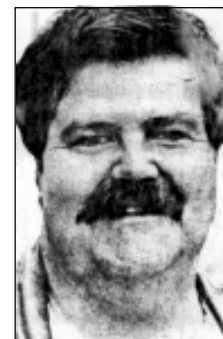
ment. They began organizing a group to provide a voice for non-Indians who supported the concept of sovereignty and other basic human rights. This group, The Flathead Reservation Human Rights Coalition, would go on to become one of the local human rights groups which formed the Montana Human Rights Network.

The first public meeting of the group was held on September 23, 1989. The group brought in Ken Toole (current Program Director of the Human Rights Network and primary author of this report) as a guest speaker to talk about hate group activity in Montana. The meeting was attended by 30 to 40 people. Significantly, several white supremacists were present and vocal during the meeting. Over the next several months, the Flathead Reservation Human Rights Coalition became very focused on organizing community response to the presence of these individuals in the community.

The white supremacists on the Flathead Reservation had organized themselves in several ways. First, Keith Roberts, who was a pastor in a local church, began promoting Christian Identity theology. Christian Identity is a theology based on a racist interpretation of the Bible. Among other things, it believes that Jews are the literal children of Satan, and people of color are "mud people." The Aryan Nations in Hayden Lake, Idaho, is an Identity Church.

Second, a local educator named Frank Ellena, began promoting a group called the Freedom Fellowship Forum. (Years later, in May 1995, Ellena was arrested in Roundup, Montana, in conjunction with militia and freeman activities.) Finally, both Ellena and Roberts ran for the local school board. By the spring of 1990, the community was well aware of the white supremacists' activity and of the Flathead Human Rights Coalition's efforts to expose and counter them.

ACE leader, Bill Covey, quickly tried to distance ACE from the controversy surrounding these overt white supremacists. The March 23 issue of *The*



Frank Ellena

Missoulian reported Covey’s and ACE’s perception of Ellena and Roberts. He said, “We’ve condemned them because they are far out. As far as I’m concerned what they are saying is total garbage.” But Covey’s efforts only entangled ACE more deeply. A group of Ellena’s and Robert’s supporters, consisting of Joleen Huyser, Ed Engel, and Gary Richard, came to the next ACE meeting to confront Covey. Engel said he had heard a recording of an ACE meeting where Covey accused him of handing out literature with swastikas on it. Engel refused to say who had recorded the ACE meeting, but said that what Covey was referring to was a publication by Pastor Pete Peters. Peters runs a prominent Christian Identity church out of Colorado. After the meeting, Engel told a reporter that Covey had apologized, and Engel concluded by saying, “What the ACE organization is trying to do is great.” Engel also confirmed that two ACE members, Nilah Miller and Del Palmer, had attended some of Keith Roberts’ meetings (*Ronan Pioneer* 4-19-90).

Of course, Palmer was more than just a member of ACE. He had been a leader in the anti-Indian movement on the Flathead Reservation for years. Though not on the board at the time of the meeting, Palmer had served on the boards of all three anti-Indian groups in the area. He was a founder of MOD and of FREE. Palmer regularly contributed letters to the editor. Also, he often spoke publically representing anti-Indian groups of which he was a member.

Nilah Miller was also a long-term board member of ACE, having recently completed a term as vice-president. Miller’s affinity for far-right ideology was

well established in the community. In 1984, she wrote a letter to the editor urging people to support the Populist Party. Founded by Willis Carto, the Populist Party was little more than the political arm of the anti-Semitic Liberty Lobby out of Washington, D.C.



Campaign poster for Bo Gritz

Anti-Indian Indians

Throughout its history, the anti-Indian movement has curried Native American anti-Indian activists. Of course, these individuals provide a rhetorical foil for the charge that the movement is racist at its core. Somewhat ironically, the propaganda value of these individuals rests on the assumption that a person could not be prejudiced against a group, because the person is a member of that group. It is a simplistic but persuasive tool.

This is not unique to the anti-Indian movement. Hard-core white supremacist groups have reveled in forging alliances with African American individuals like black separatist Robert Brock. Brock will appear at Klan rallies wearing a hood and sheet along with Klan leadership, then one by one they remove their hoods, of course saving Brock for last.

Because of their propaganda value, the rise of these individuals within the movement is often meteoric. Examples in Montana are Roland Morris, a member of the Chippewa Tribe from Minnesota who moved to Montana and ended up as Chair of ACE and Vice Chair of the Citizens Equal Rights Alliance (CERA); Mary Lee Jacobsen, a member of the Blackfeet Tribe and long time Secretary of the East Slope Taxpayers Association; and Billy Big Spring, a member of the Blackfeet Tribe and often-used speaker by anti-Indian groups.

In 1992, Miller again wrote a letter to the editor about the Populist Party. This time, she urged people to support far-right political figure Bo Gritz, an Identity adherent. She also wrote, “All of you who are keeping current, have you heard anything about Patrick Buchanan and David Duke lately? The latter was certainly subjected to a smear campaign which was without equal. He sure must be doing something right or they (the media) wouldn’t have been so vitriolic or the Louisiana voters blackmailed into voting a crook for governor.”

In May of 1993, Montana Human Rights Network staff member, Ken Toole, was speaking in Polson. Nilah Miller, Del Palmer and his wife at-

tended and sat together. In explaining “holocaust deniers” in the racist right wing, Toole told the audience about a lawsuit filed against a group called the Institute for Historical Review. As part of its anti-Semitic propaganda, the Institute offered a reward to anyone who could prove the Holocaust had occurred. A Holocaust survivor named Mel Mermelstein presented himself as proof. When the Institute refused to pay the reward, he filed suit. Mermelstein won and was awarded \$90,000 by the court. When Toole finished telling the story, Miller objected from her seat in the audience, saying that the whole suit had been staged, citing the Liberty Lobby’s magazine *The Spotlight* as the source.

In early May of 1990, a flyer began circulating on the Flathead Reservation which advertised an Indian Shoot. The flyer, a piece of hard-core racist propaganda, had been circulating in Wisconsin around disputes over fishing rights. ACE was dragged into the controversy surrounding the racist flyer when Tribal Chair Mickey Pablo said the flyer had been attached to both ACE and CERA Newsletters (*Missoulian* 5-3-90). Current ACE Chair, David Lister, and Bill Covey, speaking for CERA, both quickly condemned the flyer and said they had no knowledge of its origins.

ACE took yet another public relations hit in a presentation for the Montana Human Rights Network by Leonard Zeskind in Helena. Zeskind, an internationally known human rights researcher, detailed linkages between the racist right and anti-Indian groups in other states. Zeskind specifically mentioned ACE, and his comments were picked up by media around the state (*Billings Gazette* 5-10-90).

One week later, the Flathead Reservation Human Rights Coalition brought Rev. Hidetoshi Tanaka to speak in Ronan. Tanaka was the associate general secretary of the General Commission of Race and Religion of the United Methodist Church. The meeting was stopped early because of disruption by some

people in the audience. Midway into the meeting, Frank Ellena interrupted Tanaka and asked for a definition of racism. He entered into a debate with Tanaka over the answer. When the hosting pastor, Dick Marine, asked the audience to hold questions until the end,

ACE President David Lister objected. From the audience, Joleen Huyser interjected, “Christ separates the races.” Ellena’s and Huyser’s comments, combined with the tenor of this meeting, further associated ACE with the expressly racist contingent in the community (*Flathead Courier* 5-17-90).

ACE President Lister tried to mitigate some of the damage done in a long letter to the editor several weeks later. After criticizing the organizers of the meeting, he said, “All Citizens Equal and myself are

dedicated to working toward a solution that will benefit all people in Montana. At times, we may become detractors and disruptive, but the only way the people can be heard is to shout at the top of their voice that ‘We the people will not tolerate racism and injustice’” (*Ronan Pioneer* 5-31-90).

Despite Lister’s efforts, the public image of ACE once again was tarnished by its association

with racist elements in the community. The roll and tumble ACE activists had been through since mid-1989 left little doubt that the group was tangled up with overtly white supremacist activists. In addition, it also became apparent that some ACE leadership shared the philosophy and beliefs of the far right.



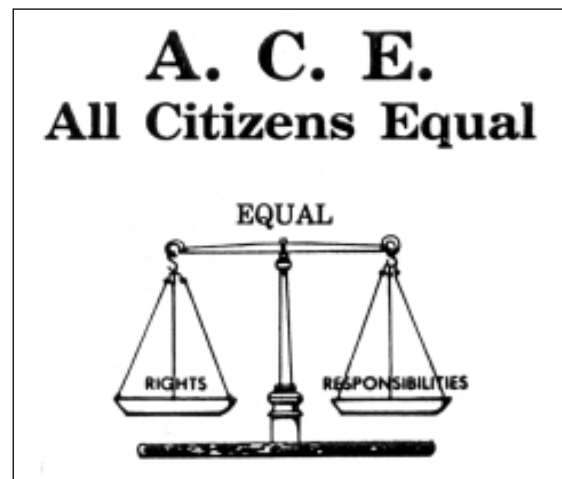
Pastor Pete Peters’ Scriptures for America

ACE
Board of Directors
1990

David Lister, President
Nilah Miller, Vice President/Treasurer
Shirley Jacobson, Secretary
Dan Scott
John Cramer
Jack Rupe
John Montieth
James Boyle

Perhaps the clearest indicator of how far ACE had been pushed to the margins of local politics is highlighted by statements of local Republican legislator, John Mercer. Mercer is a well-known opponent of tribal government in the Montana Legislature and known for playing hard-ball politics. By 1991, Mercer said, "ACE is not helping anybody. I'd like to see ACE dissolved" (*Missoulian* 3-2-91).

After the debacles of 1989-1991, ACE entered a period of relative quiet. ACE continued to be active on a host of issues, writing letters to the editor, working on legislation and holding meetings. During this time, ACE members worked on issues it opposed like "retrocession" of law enforcement powers over non-Indians to tribal police and tribal hunting and fishing permits. It advocated the expansion of Highway 93, which is the main arterial through the reservation. The tribe was opposed to expansion. ACE fought the tribe's refusal to allow the Yellowstone Pipeline to run through the reservation. But ACE's



ACE's Scale of Justice

image in the community had been tarnished. Although it remained the primary voice of anti-Indian sentiment in Montana, its activity was limited to controversies of the moment, and its membership appeared to be static at best.

ANTI-INDIAN ACTIVISTS IN LEGISLATIVE HALLS

Editor's note: This section was contributed by Christine Kaufmann, Research and Policy Director for the Montana Human Rights Network. She has been a lobbyist at the Montana Legislature since 1989 and has firsthand knowledge of the presence of ACE in that arena. Since 1993, she has testified in opposition to ACE at most of the hearings mentioned below.

It is not the intention of this section to give a complete analysis of the activities of the anti-Indian movement in the legislature. However, several illustrations will give a flavor of the issues that arose in that arena.

In March 1989, over 40 people signed their names in opposition to House Bill 446 at a hearing before the House Judiciary Committee. House Bill 446, which passed, simply authorized the state of Montana to enact a negotiated agreement between the governor and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes over regulation of hunting and fishing on reservation lands owned by non-Indians and off-reservation hunting rights for tribal members. The agreement had been negotiated between Governor

Schwinden and the tribes. The tribes presented Schwinden with a signed agreement on December 13, 1988, just weeks before he left office. The new Governor, Stan Stephens, notified the tribes on February 10, 1989, of his intention not to introduce legislation to enact the agreement. Senator Bill Yellowtail then introduced SB 446.

Many of the opponents to SB 446 had connections to ACE, although only three, John E. Cramer, and F.W. and Agnes Rockwell, noted the affiliation on the sign-in sheet or in written testimony. Cramer was on the ACE board in 1989, and F. W. Rockwell had been on the boards of ACE, MOD (see pages 12-20), and ICERR (see page 14). Also present at the hearing were Del Palmer, Lucy and John Cochrane, Ruby Gene and Bill Covey (then ACE president), Shirley Cramer and others who generally indicated they were representing only themselves and their families. In addition, the East Slope Taxpayers Association (see page 21) showed up with

their regular cadre of activists, Mary Lee Jacobsen, Ralph Johnson, Boyd Evans, and Kay Hoyt.

The testimony was clearly orchestrated ahead of time. Bill Covey

announced in his testimony that “we have four specific amendments.” He then presented the first one. The next three speakers - Stan Ryan, John Cochrane, and John Cramer - presented subsequent amendments.

Most speakers, including Del Palmer, objected to the negotiation process leading up to the agreement, which they characterized as “illegal” and “unconstitutional.” The underlying theme, however, was fear of any Indian jurisdiction over white landowners.

“[T]he bill...allows the shifting of legal jurisdiction over private lands, in subtle and not so subtle ways to Tribal Government,” said Bill Covey. “The Department [of Fish, Wildlife and Park] has amply demonstrated... their apparent disdain and disinterest for providing adequate and appropriate

save guards [sic] to the rights of Montana citizens,” Covey continued. John Cochrane testified that “[t]ribal court systems across the United States are notorious for civil rights violations for both Indians and non-Indians” and went on to state his fear that SB 446 would allow Indian courts to rule on civil rights for non-Indians. Ralph Johnson recommended “removal of all deeded lands from the threat of tribal jurisdiction.”

Retrocession

Two years later (the Montana Legislature meets every two years), ACE was back to protest another tribal initiative. Decades earlier, when the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes lacked law enforcement expertise, they voluntarily entered into an agreement to share legal jurisdiction with the state. The agreement gave the state power to arrest and prosecute Indians for criminal offenses committed on the

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“The Constitution was drafted well before the Hellgate Treaty and that treaty cannot be used to circumvent or violate our Constitution.”

Terri Winter
Testifying against SB 446
1989

reservation. The Flathead Reservation, home to the Salish and Kootenai, was the only reservation that opted for such an agreement. By 1991, the tribes judged they were in a position to resume what they saw as their job. They were also concerned that the court system was not always sensitive to Indians. HB 797 allowed the tribes to “retrocede” and regain the

called for the abolition of All Citizens Equal. Mercer was concerned that ACE’s presence in the debate was being used to discredit any opposition to the tribes. He said, “They’re saying everyone belongs to a racist organization here. (ACE) is not helping anybody. I’d like to see ACE dissolved.”

Most of ACE’s efforts were at home, producing flyers and attending public meetings. However, John and Diane Monteith did testify at the hearing before the House Judiciary Committee in February. Both had been on ACE’s board in the recent past. Ruby Gene and Bill Covey were also present. Interestingly, a month later, after Mercer’s call for dissolution of ACE, Bill Covey testified against the bill in the Senate hearing, but not as a member of ACE. He claimed to represent the Montana Farm Bureau.

Hale Jeffers, head of the Citizen’s Rights Organization (CRO) (see page 17) and recently on the board of CERA (see pages 22-23), also testified against the bill. His written testimony was from CRO, but the secretary recorded him as a representative of the Montana Stockgrowers Association, indicating that he identified himself in that manner to the public. Jeffers asked that instead of allowing the Flathead Reservation to retrocede, the legislature impose similar county jurisdiction on all other tribes.

Sen. Dick Pinsoneault, a fellow Democrat, denounced Representative Angela Russell as “racist and bigoted” for her support of the bill. Russell was the sponsor of the bill and a member of the Crow tribe.

Retrocession Revisited

Two years later, in 1993, the tribes were back again with SB 363, which restored partial criminal jurisdiction over Indians on the reservation and was referred to as partial retrocession. A compromise version of the original bill was eventually passed, after the original was rejected in a heated debate. During the controversy, Rep. Bob Gervais (D-Browning) called Mercer a racist, the tribes declared an economic boycott against Lake County businesses, the tribes withdrew from negotiations with the state over gambling, and membership forms for the racist Aryan Nations group were circulated on the reservation.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“It is unfair and shortsighted to ignore the plight of those...who feel the... impacts of lawlessness caused by retrocession, merely to placate a very nebulous self-determination claim by tribal leaders.”

Bill Covey
Testifying against HB 797
1991

jurisdiction they’d given up in 1965.

According to *The Missoulian*, “HB 797 has drawn heavy fire from Lake County officials and All Citizens Equal, a reservation-based group that opposes tribal authority over non-Indians ” (2-24-91). Just over a week later (3-2-91) the paper reported that hundreds of flyers that warned citizens to “BE AWARE” because HB 797 “affects your life and property” were distributed at Lake County offices and on the street. They warned that crimes such as “burglary, theft, DUI, assault, domestic abuse, dope selling and usage would be among the minor crimes overlooked by our government” if the measure were to become law.

Speaker of the House, John Mercer, who represented part of the reservation, called on the tribes to “back off” and seek input from non-Indian reservation residents before proceeding. He accused the tribes of trying to “ram HB 797 down our throats” and promised to fight the effort. “Mark my words, it won’t become law,” he said. Tribal Vice Chairman Laurence Kenmille said that Mercer acted like a “blinded racehorse with ACE on its back” in his successful efforts to kill HB 797 (*The Missoulian* 3-2-91).

In an interview, Mercer charged that “racism was used to carry the day” when HB 797 passed the House. According to *The Missoulian*, Mercer also

In February of 1993, the Lake County Board of Commissioners held a public forum on SB 363. ACE board member, John Cramer, called for a reservation-wide vote before the bill could be debated in the legislature (*Missoulian* 2-11-93).

Speaker of the House John Mercer again played a major role in opposing the bill. He was widely quoted as having said to tribal attorney Pat Smith, “The trouble with you, Pat, is you don’t think like a white man.” Mercer denied the report.

After Mercer orchestrated the defeat of the bill in the House, the tribes adopted a resolution stating the following:

“the bill was defeated by the personal biases of a few individuals, in particular the Lake County Commissioners, the Lake County sheriff, Rep. John Mercer and the membership of a Lake County-based fringe group know as All Citizens Equal. It is time that Lake County’s elected leaders understand they cannot have it both ways. They cannot reap all of the economic benefits of the tribal economy, yet continue to espouse the policy of... the 1950s.”

With that statement, the tribes organized an economic boycott of non-tribal banks and businesses that effectively turned around the vote and gained passage of the bill.

Although Mercer generally acknowledged that citizen opposition was “less vocal and out in the open” than in the previous session, he defended his role in killing SB 363 and expressed anger at the boycott. Mercer contended that the main issue was “the basic civil rights” of non-Indians (*Missoulian*, 3-30-93).

ACE activists apparently stayed away from the legislative halls, perhaps being sensitive to Mercer’s criticism the previous session. Opposition to the re-

cession bill was carried by Lake County officials and the Montana Magistrates Association. ACE, however, made its presence felt. Gregory Mohr, President of the Montana Magistrates, sent a letter to Senate Judiciary Chairman Bill Yellowtail, expressing his disapproval of a letter being circulated by ACE which quoted one of their officers out of context. He said, “They are wrong...I am appalled that A.C.E. can blatantly print misleading information to further their agenda. I feel they should be publically reprimanded.”

Many ACE activists were among the 400 people who signed a petition in opposition to SB 368 which was entered into the record. Arwood Stickney, a long-time white supremacist, who would later become an activist for the violent World Church of the Creator, was present at the House hearing and signed his name in opposition to SB 368.

The Jore Years

With the election of Rep. Rick Jore in 1995, anti-Indian activists were back in force to the legislative halls. During this and the following two sessions,

Jore’s unsuccessful efforts to terminate the state-tribal hunting and fishing agreement enacted with SB 446 in 1989 served as a rallying point for ACE’s political activity and, in fact, may have been the primary arena of activity for the organization. Finally, they were on the offensive, pro-

posing policy changes instead of responding to tribal initiatives. Despite the conservative leaning of the legislature as a whole, ACE and Jore did not fare well. Each session, Jore’s bills died in the first committee hearing.

In February 1995, Del Palmer, John Cramer, Stan Ryan, Dan Sellers, and Roland Morris, testified in favor of Jore’s bill. All identified themselves sim-

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“At least the losers do not boycott innocent business people, they do not close borders, they do not remove money from banks, they do not threaten people who try to stick up for their rights as citizens. Wouldn’t you think it’s about time the Confederated Tribes, as citizens of the United States and the State of Montana, started acting like citizens of the United States and the State of Montana.”

John Cochrane
Lake County Leader
April 18, 1993

ply as “citizens,” without noting any affiliation with ACE. Del Palmer testified that the agreement was not working because authorities had not issued citations for failure to possess the state/tribal license even when violations were reported. Palmer was aware of this firsthand, because he had personally notified the authorities of his intent to hunt without a license on his property and invited them to come and arrest him in the act. This became a tradition for Palmer. Since 1991, Palmer has asked authorities to arrest him for hunting without a permit. According to Palmer, he “want[s] to parade the case before a jury until [state officials] make up their minds the case is wrong” (*Billings Gazette* 11-29-96). Most years he has been cited, but the case is not tried because of lack of evidence. District Court Judge C.B. McNeil did rule that Palmer has no legal defense for hunting without the tribal permit. He urged Palmer to take his arguments to the legislature. Based on Palmer’s recurring appearances at the legislature, he took McNeil’s advice.

In a hearing on a similar bill in February 1997, Del Palmer, John Cramer, Stan Ryan, Sandra Shook, and Lisa Morris all testified in favor of the bill. In that year, Jore also sponsored HJR 11, an unsuccessful attempt to codify white resistance to tribal control of the National Bison Range (see pages 35-37). Del Palmer, Sandra Shook, and Lisa Morris testified in favor of the bill. Lisa and Roland Morris branched out in 1997 to join with the Christian Coalition and Eagle Forum as supporters of two bills designed to end affirmative action programs in Montana. These

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Until such time as we have representation in the tribes quasi-government through having a voice and a vote in that government, we do not recognize their authority or any type of jurisdiction over us -- regardless of any illegal joint agreements entered into by the state of Montana and [Fish Wildlife and Parks].”

David & Phonacelle Shapel
Testifying in support of
HB 426 & HB 427
August 17, 1998

bills also failed under heavy opposition from the tribes on all seven Indian reservations and numerous church and public interest groups.

In 1999, the Morrises were absent. Del Palmer and Sandra Shook identified themselves with ACE in support of Jore’s now familiar bill and another bill that would have amended the State/Tribal Cooperative Agreements Act in favor of non-Indian landowners on reservations. Skip Palmer and Dave Shapel also supported the bills. Early in the session, Jore had announced his intention to introduce the same anti-affirmative action bills carried by Rep. Bill Boharski in the previous session. Those bills did not materialize.

A NEW ERA

ACE
Board of Directors
1995

John Cramer, President
John Weber, Vice President
Shirley Cramer, Secretary/Treasurer
Luella Roller
Tom Blevins
Del Palmer
Skip Palmer

Through 1995 and 1996, new leaders emerged from a local controversy over the National Bison Range at Moiese. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes began efforts to take over administration of the Bison Range. After two years of controversy and the formation of several new groups, two new leaders of anti-Indian activity emerged, Roland and Lisa Morris. Roland Morris, a Native American, was elected to ACE’s board in 1997 and served as president in 1998. Morris’ wife, Lisa, was elected secretary in 1997. (ACE’s newsletter said that Lisa Morris was elected; however, corporate documents in Helena never show her on the board.) Once in leadership positions, the Morrises began trying to polish ACE’s image. Apparently mindful of the fact that Roland’s election as the ACE chair has a kind of man-bites-dog appeal to the media, Morris’ press efforts focused on the race issue. Advertisements taken out in the local paper proclaimed that ACE was “now a multi-racial group working toward peaceful, mutual cooperation within confused jurisdictions of their reservation, ACE bylaws do not tolerate racism in any form.”

Roland Morris is an enrolled member of the Chippewa Tribe in Minnesota. In 1988, he and his family moved from Minneapolis to the Flathead Reservation. Roland Morris runs an upholstering business in Ronan. The Morrises have five children and are “home schoolers.” The Morrises have established themselves in the political fabric of the community in several ways. First, they are advocates of local legislator Rick Jore. Second, they were the leaders of the controversy surrounding the Bison Range. Third, Roland ran for the legislature in 1996.

Though Roland Morris generally holds leadership positions, his wife, Lisa, is the more prolific of the two. She writes numerous letters to the editor, as well as articles for ACE. They have belonged to the ultra-conservative contingent in the community for a number of years. In their political work, both emphasize their Christian faith and have been involved in setting up non-profit religious organizations. To understand the nature of Morrises’ activity in the community, it is valuable to go back to 1995 and examine the controversy surrounding the Bison Range.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“It can be no wonder that Indian people are tired and depressed. Not only do many feel alienated from the United States Government and the rest of society, but many tribal governments can’t be trusted either. This situation, having become a hopeless fact of life, along with poverty and other factors, has bred depression and loss of trust.”

Roland Morris
ACE
April 7, 1998

BUFFALO CHIPS IN INDIAN COUNTRY: THE CONCERNED SIGNATORIES

Located on the Flathead Reservation, the National Bison Range was established in 1909 by the federal government. The Tribal Self-Determination Act and amendments in 1992 encouraged tribal governments to assume greater control over their own future. Along those lines, the Salish and Kootenai Confederated Tribes entered negotiations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to assume control of the Bison Range. These negotiations gave the anti-Indian movement its best opportunity for community organizing in years. Tempers flared over the proposal and anti-Indian sentiment ran high. But in the end, ACE and other anti-Indian forces in the community flubbed and stumbled, ultimately failing to use the controversy to bolster their images or to gain new supporters.

The dispute over the National Bison Range brings several things about the anti-Indian movement into clear focus. It demonstrates how these controversies of the moment can be used to provide energy and support to a broader array of related issues. This energy helped build membership and infra-structures for numerous groups. The great irony in this dispute was that anti-Indian activists, who are as much anti-federal as anti-Indian, found themselves lauding the federal administration of the Bison Range while opposing local control. . . . by tribal government.

Although ACE leaders and supporters were organizing opposition to the transfer, most often they chose to do so individually or with less well-known and newly formed organizations. As the Bison Range controversy was brewing in 1994 and 1995, ACE was coming out of a time period where it was closely identified with active white supremacist groups in the community.

Lisa Morris was one of the most active persons

organizing opposition to the Bison Range transfer. Lisa is a regular letter-to-the-editor writer and, over time, has been a consistent and vociferous opponent to tribal government on numerous issues. Clearly a cultural conservative, Morris peppers her letters to the editor with religious references. She writes regarding a victory in the Bison Range controversy, "I hope that this gives people some encouragement that yes, we can all make a difference. Praise God." In another letter titled "Spirituality Not Based on Race," she writes,

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"If you want to be separate from all others, why not renounce all federal support and start your own Bison Range, since you think you can do the job better. Must you have everything just handed to you?"

Letter to the Editor
St. Ignatius

"Also, the Bible tells us a relationship with God requires a conscious, personal decision on the part of every individual, no matter their color." With the help of Representative Rick Jore, she and her husband started a "non-profit Christian transportation ministry," called Valley Missions Inc. She is an ardent defender of Rick Jore, writing numerous letters in response to criticism of him. In local papers, she's also a strong supporter of tax-protest leader,



Rob Natelson

Rob Natelson.

In the Bison Range controversy, her opposition to tribal control clearly shows the interrelationship of her religious and political views. Alongside her concerns about fairness and federal Indian policy, she objected to the public being exposed to Indian religion and culture at the Range. "I'm not interested in the cultural spirituality," Morris said. (*Missoulian* 9-25-99).



Rick Jore

During early 1995, Lisa Morris helped organize a petition drive to oppose tribal control of the Bison Range. According to Morris, more than 3,000 names were gath-

We know tribal jurisdiction issues are affecting you.

It's not a hopeless situation. We can do something about it.

Last Year, Secretary Babbitt's Plan was to have the CS&KT take over the management of the National Bison Range in 1995.

As a community, we successfully put up roadblocks to that management transfer.

As a community, can do more! but we need your help!

**Polson Courthouse Meeting Room
May 30, 1996 • 7:00 pm**

Come and hear what we can do!!
Refreshments served

REMEMBER

It Matters Who You Vote For This Primary! Vote June 4
sponsored by the Signatories of the Bison Range Petition
PO Box 237, Chouteau, MT 59824

A 1996 Signatories of the Bison Range advertisement

ered. From these names a new group was formed, The Concerned Signatories of the Bison Range Petition. In the Bison Range controversy, the issue of race was never far from the front burner. Morris was always there to address it, sometimes even when it was not there. In a *Missoulian* article about the Concerned Signatories of the Bison Range endorsing of local conservative candidates, reporter John Stromnes wrote, “She (Lisa Morris) said her group was not racist, a claim no one at the meeting made” (*Missoulian* 5-31-96).

Morris helped to organize rallies in the spring of 1995. Invited speakers included Rick Jore and ultra-conservative legislators Dick Green, Ethel Harding and Bob Keenan. U.S. Senator Conrad Burns was represented by aide Amy Fisher.

Following the May 13, 1995, rally attended by about 100 people, Morris wrote a letter to the editor accusing proponents of the range transfer of attempting to disrupt the rally. She wrote, “We praise God that (Lake County) Commissioner Stipe and Representative Jore are both the wise calm men they are and that they were able to quickly put a stop to the escalating tension” (*Leader* 5-18-95). The Associated Press failed to report any disruption, but said, “One person said afterward that he never expected to be at a gathering of good conservative ranchers saying the federal government could do a better job of managing anything than local people.”

Organizing efforts continued through the summer, culminating in a hearing August 28, 1995. The hearing, organized by U.S. Senator Conrad Burns and held in the Lake County Courthouse, was hosted by Don Ashe of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Racist sentiment was clearly present during the hearing. When Ashe explained that the tribes have historical, cultural and religious ties to the range, the crowd responded with snickers and cat calls (*Missoulian* 8-29-99). During the meeting, local resident, Angie Read, said that Indians are lazy and it would take “10 others” to see that the job was done if an Indian was hired at the range.

From his unique position as an anti-Indian Native American, Roland Morris addressed the topic of religion and buffalo. In an interview with the *Lake County Leader*, he said that the tribes’ contention that buffalo are sacred is not consistent with previous decisions to sell buffalo. The reporter then pointed out that Roland Morris is “a full-blooded Chippewa” and does not believe buffalo are sacred. But in explaining his view, Morris drew on Indian stereotypes, saying, “I admire them and would like to hunt one with a bow and arrow. The meat would feed my

ACE
A Case of Stagnation

- ACE’s core group of organizers are more rigidly ideological than their predecessors in MOD, embracing political figures who are well-known for having extreme political views, such as Rob Natelson, Rick Jore and John Stokes. At the same time, the group consciously rejects more moderate conservatives like John Mercer and Marc Racicot.
- ACE’s organizers are fixated on race issues and constant denials backfire, placing race in the mix of issues they are forced to deal with. In fairness, it should be pointed out that no matter how organizers try to manage this issue, their history is such that it is not a “manageable” topic.
- ACE fundamentally doesn’t understand the race issue. Organizers fail to recognize the inherent racism of their position that tribal governments don’t have a right to exist.

family.”

The media reports of the August 28 meeting spawned a flurry of letters to the editor directly addressing the race issue vis-a-vis the Bison Range. Lisa Morris wrote, “It might even be fair to point out that when non-white people are up in arms about their lack of voice in the community and proclaim frustration with people in power, they are called oppressed. But when the situation is reversed the hindered are called racists.” Her analysis is consistent with the anti-Indian movement’s effort to portray the issue as one of whites being oppressed by Indians.

Just as organizers stumbled in using the organizational shell of The Concerned Signatories of the Bison Range Petition, it seems they hit on another idea for a new organization. In December of 1996, a group called the U.S. Taxpayers Striving for Treatment as Such took out a large advertisement in *The Lake County Leader*. Under banner headlines saying, “Equity. Diversity. Tolerance. Who’s fighting against these principles?,” the ad detailed tribal government decisions the group disagreed with. The ad-

dress for the group was the same as the address for the Concerned Signatories of the Bison Range Petition.

The U.S. Taxpayers Seeking Treatment as Such placed small type at the bottom of the advertisement which said, “We are a multiracial group, formed to pursue reason within Federal Indian Policy and tolerate no form of racism.” The disclaimer on ACE materials in 1997 after Roland and Lisa Morris were elected to the board read, “All Citizens Equal is now a multiracial group working toward peaceful, mutual cooperation within the confused jurisdiction of this reservation. ACE bylaws do

not tolerate racism in any form.”

The Bison Range controversy provided an opportunity for organizational expansion. Had the organizers had the sophistication of Lloyd Ingraham and the others who formed Montanans Opposing Discrimination more than 20 years earlier, the controversy could have been effectively used to build a larger and stronger organization. Instead, this new group of anti-Indian organizers missed an opportunity.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“One person said afterward that he never expected to be at a gathering of good conservative ranchers saying the federal government could do a better job of managing anything than local people.”

Associated Press
1995

**THE 1996 ELECTION:
ROLAND MORRIS AND THE “VAST RIGHT-WING CONSPIRACY”**



Roland Morris

At least part of the reason that Roland and Lisa Morris have been unable to build ACE into a larger organization is that they have little appeal to the political main. Roland Morris’ bid for a legislative seat in 1996 provides insight into his position on the political landscape, beyond the narrow focus of Indian issues. The Morrises have long-standing and strong ties to local Representative Rick Jore. Jore is one of eight legislators identified by the Human Rights Network as supporting the views of the far right. Jore received a \$200 contribution from Howard Phillips of the far-right U.S. Taxpayers Party. He has been a strong and consistent promoter of far-right philosophy in the legislature on issues from taxation to home schooling. Jore has also been a consistent supporter of the Morrises, promoting their non-profit organizations and speaking at rallies they have organized.

In his campaign announcement, Roland Morris said he supported lessening water quality standards, tax credits for home schools and ending Aid to Families with Dependent Children. He opposed a minimum wage hike. Morris raised little money and lost the election in the primary. He received contributions from James and Charlotte Mitchell of Juenez Pueblo, New Mexico. Jim Mitchel was on the board of CERA at that time.

Morris referenced “RINO” in his press release announcing his candidacy. The acronym RINO stands for Republicans in Name Only. This Political Action Committee was comprised of the most conservative elements in the Montana Republican Party and was born out their frustration that the party

was selling out the traditional values of Republicanism. The group’s statement of purpose reads, “This group believes in true Republican ideals. We will oppose Republican candidates who do not stand for these ideals and support those who do.” In the 1996 election, they gave \$100 to 15 legislative candidates, all on the extreme right-end of the political spectrum, including Morris.

Of those supported for election by RINO, candidates John Stokes, Dick Green, Rick Jore and Roland Morris were involved in anti-Indian activities on the Flathead Reservation. Stokes is a refugee from the county movement in Washington. Almost immediately upon moving to Montana, Stokes involved himself in Flathead County land-use planning disputes. The Human Rights Network wrote an article about Stokes expressing concern about his strident rhetoric. His agenda in the 1996 election included: barring any discussion of homosexuality in schools, teaching creationism, eliminating the Endangered Species Act and advocating termination of reservations. Stokes said, “Those reservations were prisoner of war camps. Their time has come” (*Missoulian* 4-30-98).

But, more significantly, RINO is part of a deep schism within the state Republican Party. During the Gubernatorial election, the group made indepen-

<p>ACE Board of Directors 1997</p>
<p>Roland Morris, President John Cramer, Vice President Shirley Cramer, Secretary/Treasurer Lisa Morris Tom Blevins Del Palmer Skip Palmer</p>

<p>A.C.E. Says... Indian Tribal businesses enterprises should pay state and county taxes, as other businesses must!</p>
<p>Stand up for your rights! Join ALL CITIZENS EQUAL. Send your contributions to: ACE, P.O. Box 673 Polson, Mt. 59860.</p>

1985 ACE advertisement

dent expenditures against relatively moderate incumbent Governor Marc Racicot. Racicot's opponent in the election was Rob Natelson, a persistent promoter of protest politics in Montana. Lisa Morris fell firmly into the Natelson camp, writing a letter to the editor which began, "Governor Racicot has twisted truth and bloated state government with bureaucracy."

RINO wasn't the only group endorsing far-right figures. In May 1996, the Concerned Signatories of the Bison Range Petition (See pages 35-37) endorsed Roland Morris, John Stokes, and Rick Jore in legislative races and Mike Hutchins in the county commission race. The title of the group implied that the members were people who had signed a petition opposing tribal control of the National Bison Range.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"Before all the liberals in the city get all uppity about {secessionist campaigns}, they ought to remember who controls the water supplies. One little 50-gallon drum of PCP in the reservoir out there and {city residents} are all f----- up."

John Stokes
Seattle Weekly
 March 30, 1994

**Contribution Recipients
 of
 RINO**

- Allen Walters (Hamilton)
- Dick Green (Victor)
- Carol Duval (Hungry Horse)
- Henry Broers (Hungry Horse)
- Larry Baer (Kalispell)
- Roland Morris (Ronan)
- Rick Jore (Ronan)
- John Stokes (Kalispell)
- Bob Balyeat (Great Falls)
- Wes Prouse (Billings)
- Smith for State House (Billings)
- Miller for State House (Lewistown)
- Beneal for State House (Shepherd)
- Sexton for State House (Billings)
- Kramm for State House (Billings)

But, as spokesperson for the group, Lisa Morris refused to divulge who the membership was, saying that they were afraid of retribution. Roland Morris' opponent, Mike Taylor, pointed out that he had signed the petition with no intention that a political action committee would result. The Montana Commissioner of Political Practices had no PAC registration for the group. In the end, only three members of the group would identify themselves: Roland Morris, Lisa Morris and Sandra Shook. All three would be members of the ACE board in the next two years.

Roland Morris' position on the far right of the political spectrum became crystal clear during the 1996 election. He supported right-to-work legislation, as well as other wise use causes. He advocated public funding for private and home schools. He allied himself with Rick Jore, John Stokes, Dick Green and other ultra-conservative figures. All of these practices put to rest any doubt about Morris' political stance. Morris failed to make it through the primary, losing to John Mercer and garnering only 674 votes

After failing to create successful organizations with Concerned Signatories and the U.S. Taxpayers and stumbling through the 1996 election, Roland and Lisa Morris settled into leadership of ACE. In March of 1997, ACE was almost non-existent in major controversies surrounding treaty rights in Montana. This was indicative of its marginal position in the community thanks to the Morris' broader political agenda.

**UNITED STATES SENATE PROPOSALS:
CONTROVERSY BUILDING BEYOND 2000**

U.S. Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT) has long been noted for racist comments and attitudes. He has found himself in political hot water on numerous occasions for making racial slurs. During the



*Sen. Conrad Burns
(R-MT)*

1994 campaign, Burns was criticized for not campaigning on Montana's Indian reservations. This sent a message that he was not concerned about the Indian vote. Responding to the criticism, Burns said, "I don't think any one vote is more important than any other" (*Independent Record* 10-24-94).

Burns also got embroiled in the Moiese Bison Range controversy. He alleged that Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt arranged a secret deal with the Salish and Kootenai Tribal Government.

Tribal Chair Rhonda Swaney accused Burns of disseminating faulty information and fostering anti-tribal sentiment.

In late 1997, Burns came out with a proposal to "clarify" jurisdictional disputes. He wanted to congressionally abrogate tribal civil jurisdiction over non-Indians on reservations. The proposal would only have applied in Montana. In an affront to tribal leaders, Burns had the proposal announced at the annual meeting of the Montana Stockgrowers Association by aide Dwight Mackay. Though Burns said he had faxed the proposal to tribal offices, there was no advance warning given to tribes.

Had the proposal become law, it would have had sweeping impacts on Montana's Indian reservations. Needless to say, the response from Indian country was swift and loud. Burns sponsored meetings in the

state in February and March. More than 1,000 people attended the Billings meeting. A vast majority were opposed to Burns' plan. Smaller crowds expressing the same sentiment showed up at Burns' hearings in Kalispell and Great Falls. At the same time, U.S. Senator Slade Gorton of Washington was holding hearings in Washington, D.C. (March 11, 1998) and in Seattle (April 7, 1998) on a proposal to limit Tribal Sovereign Immunity.

Lisa and Roland Morris traveled to Seattle to deliver testimony before Gorton's Committee. In his testimony, Roland Morris identified himself as representing both CERA and ACE. In her report on the event, Lisa Morris bemoaned the fact that Seattle papers failed to cover Roland's testimony. Morris also submitted written testimony to Burns on behalf of ACE. However, ACE was not a player in the Burns' hearings around the state. Media reports of the hearings hardly mention ACE.

But perhaps even more telling of its lack of a role was ACE's January 1998 newsletter. It mentions the Burns and Gorton hearings in three lines, with no reporting on the proposals and no specific information. The June Newsletter failed to provide any information on the Burns' and Gorton's proposals. It is clear that very little organizational effort on ACE's part was going toward the hearings. This is understandable for the Gorton hearings which were held in Seattle. However, the Burns' hearings are

Photo courtesy of The Missoulian



Members of a predominately anti-tribal crowd look on during one of Conrad Burns' meetings on how to manage the Bison Range. It was held on August 29, 1995.

quite another matter. Had the Burns' hearings been held in 1978, MOD and its organizers clearly would have positioned themselves as the lead anti-Indian voice.

Burns' hearings were a mistake for anti-Indian forces. In the end, they only served to unify tribal leaders against Burns. The Senator was roundly criticized for insensitivity to Indian concerns. In addition, his already poor record on race issues and his occasional use of racial epithets was spotlighted in the context of an issue that really mattered to Montana. By late March of 1998, Burns announced that he did not plan to introduce his proposal in the U.S. Senate. In making the announcement, Burns said he still believed that jurisdictional issues must be addressed. He announced that hearings would be held in April with U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado. These hearings were held in Billings on April 8 with much less objection from Indian country. This was prob-

ably because Night Horse Campbell is Native American and because tribes were involved in planning the event and invited to participate. ACE was not invited to testify. Apparently the Morrisises were losing interest in ACE. By June, leadership had been handed back to Del Palmer who assumed the chair position.

It is important to recognize that ACE's relative inactivity in the jurisdictional controversy is not the death of the group. The anti-Indian movement has shown a remarkable ability to reconstruct itself around new issues of controversy, and Conrad Burns seems committed to providing the fodder. In an editorial in *The Missoulian* on May 7, 1998, Burns wrote that he remains committed to doing something about jurisdictional confusion. He wrote, "Families who have lived on Montana reservations for generations but do not belong to the tribe are left out of the decision process. Regardless of how many generations they've lived on their land or how many tax dollars they provide to the tribes, their voices will never be heard by tribal government." Burns' shallow understanding of treaty rights is bound to lead to more controversy.



Courtesy of the Billings Gazette

THE NATIVE AMERICAN PRESS/OJIBWE NEWS MORRIS FINDS YET ANOTHER ROOST

In the fall of 1998, a new publication, *The Native American Press/Ojibwe News*, began circulating on the Flathead Reservation. At first glance, this newspaper appeared to be a publication which concerned itself with Indian issues in a number of states. But a closer reading showed it to be from an anti-Indian perspective. And, as is common in the anti-Indian movement's claim to civil rights advocacy, the subhead read, "We Support Equal Opportunity For All People."

The Native American Press/Ojibwe News has been in business for about 11 years and is currently published out of St. Paul, MN. The publisher is William J. Lawrence. Lawrence is an enrolled member of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians. He has a law degree and served as an officer in the Marine Corp in Vietnam. In a letter to the Human Rights Network, the Editor of the Native American Press, Judy Shortridge, claimed that Lawrence has had his civil rights violated in the Red Lake tribal court five times. Shortridge provided no specific information about those incidents. Like Roland Morris, Lawrence testified for Gorton's bill to limit tribal sovereign immunity (copies are posted at CERA's website: <http://www.citizensalliance.org>).

Articles for the *Ojibwe News* are accepted from around the country, but the majority of stories focus on issues in Minnesota. In an interview with MHRN, Lawrence said the effort to circulate in Montana had not been as successful as they had hoped. Lisa Morris was the contact for distribution in Montana. Lawrence said that he had met Morris through work with CERA.

The Indian community on the Flathead Reservation was quick to recognize the anti-Indian bias of the publication. In an e-mail message to tribal

employees, Dana Grant, a development officer at Salish Kootenai College, wrote, "If you have not seen this publication, it is basically a paper that gathers negative stories from Indian Country and uses those to portray the contemporary situation in Indian Country. One in ten articles is relevant but most are unbalanced in their reporting and don't appear to represent Native Americans (as the name implies) at all." Grant also contacted the publisher and was told tribal sovereignty needed to be reexamined.

The October 30, 1998, issue proudly proclaimed the introduction of the Rocky Mountain edition. Lisa Morris was the critical link in this new endeavor. The only stories in the first edition related to the Rocky Mountains were written by Morris. One was a lengthy article

criticizing the Montana Human Rights Network. (MHRN requested an opportunity to respond but never heard back from the publisher.) The other article was an editorial attacking *The Missoulian* for comments it had run about local legislator Rick Jore. There was also a full page of Montana advertising with four large advertisements. These ads included election ads for both Rick Jore and Dave Stipe, both long-time political allies of Morris, who were heavily involved in the Bison Range controversy. In addition, there was a smaller add from Kalispell attorney Jerry O'Neil and one for Roland Morris' upholstery shop. The contact number to purchase advertising was Morris' business.

In a November 1999 interview with MHRN, the publisher said that the Native American Press was no longer circulating in Montana, because they had failed to develop a market. He said that they were still interested in getting a Montana audience, and that Lisa Morris was still working toward that.



**Native
American
Press / Ojibwe News**

The Native American Press' Ojibwe News

CONCLUSION

Concerned Landowners Association
Board of Directors
1997

Ralph Johnson, President
Arlee Joliffe, Vice President
Darrell Peterson, Treasurer
Mary Lee Jacobsen

In June of 1998, Roland Morris was elected as Vice President of CERA. While he remained on the ACE board, he gave up the chair position, which was assumed by Del Palmer. Corporate papers filed in January 1999 listed Sandy Shook as the new secretary. Morris's personal web page (<http://www.ronan.net/~morris>) contains numerous links to anti-Indian information sources, including CERA, but nothing about ACE. The 1999 ACE annual picnic was held at Palmer's park near Charlo in early August and was attended by about 10 people. Palmer attributed the poor turnout to an error in the newspaper advertising the meeting. Stan Ryan became chairman in early 2000. In a letter to members, Ryan said ACE was the only group watching state, county and tribal governments, because they might "adversely effect your rights and your property." Ryan also wrote that money given to ACE also supports CERA.

In March of 1996, the East Slope Tax Payers Association changed its name to the Concerned Landowners Association. As discussed previously, this group has been very static demonstrating almost no change over time and very little growth. The corpo-

rate report for 1985 to 1988 listed Ralph Johnson as President, Vice President was Arlee Joliffe and the Secretary was Mary Lee Jacobsen.

Whether ACE fades into history or resurrects itself around some new controversial issue is important only for purposes of organizational analysis. The far more important issue is how the anti-Indian movement moves its agenda in the political arena. The bad news is, it will likely gather strength in the coming years, particularly in Montana.

Montana's public education system is doing a woefully inadequate job of providing information to students on Indian issues, even though it is required by the Montana Constitution. The result is that citizens of the state are increasingly ignorant about treaty rights and tribal sovereignty. This makes them far more vulnerable to the politics of resentment offered up by the anti-Indian movement. Finally, as Senator Conrad Burns continues to step into the fray, the intensity of conflict and confusion will only increase.

ACE
Board of Directors
1999

Vacant, President
Vacant, Vice President
Sandy Shook, Secretary
Shirley Cramer, Treasurer
Tom Blevins
John Cramer
Del Palmer
Skip Palmer

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

Much of the rhetoric and venom of the anti-Indian movement is only possible because of the lack of understanding on the part of many in the general public about Indian issues. There are numerous things which could alleviate this lack of information.

1. **EDUCATION:** Montana educational institutions must take seriously Article X, Section 1, subsection (2) which states, “The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.” There are many actions which could be taken in this area. Two important ones are:

- Native American Studies requirements for teacher certification
- Indian Education requirements in the school accreditation standards

Unfortunately, it is quite clear that school districts, the executive branch and the legislative branch are unable to wrestle with this issue in a meaningful way. The result is that Montana schools are not providing education about Indian issues. Indian education needs to be brought into the judicial arena, and the courts need to determine how schools and other educational institutions can comply with the constitutional provision.

2. **TREATY AWARENESS:** Many of the conflicts surrounding jurisdictional issues in Indian country have to do with the fact that non-Indian land owners appear to have been unaware of the status of their land when it was purchased. Upon discovering some aspect of Tribal jurisdiction over their activities, they cry foul and turn to the non-Indian government entities for redress.

State law should require that any real estate transaction on a reservation includes a statement summarizing issues which are unique to purchase of land on a reservation including potential tribal jurisdiction over the property.

3. **LOCAL OFFICIALS:** Much of the confusion and community controversy over jurisdictional issues are generated and sustained by local non-tribal elected officials. In many cases, these individuals are reacting to combination of constituent pressure and an inflated view of the power residing in their elected office, particularly when it comes to matters of tribal authority. While this combination is likely never to go away, local elected officials need better grounding in issues facing reservation communities.

Local elected officials need to receive training on issues surrounding Indian communities, particularly in the legal status of tribes and history of treaty rights. In descending order of importance, this training should be made available first to county commissioners in counties with a reservation wholly or partially in the county, state legislators, Montana’s constitutional office holders and staff, and school board members of school districts wholly or partially in reservation communities.

4. **VOTER DISTRICTING:** Native people are under-represented on many elected public bodies in Montana. (The state legislature has only four Indian members.) Indian school board members are few and far between. Indian County Commissioners and other county officials are even more rare, even in communities with significant Indian population. The reasons for this are quite complex and probably not easily remedied. However, it is quite apparent that, in some areas, Indian people have been disenfranchised in the selection of districts for various elected officials. The state Department of Justice has remained distant from these issues. The state Department of Justice should take an active roll in examining and participating

in cases where there is evidence that Indian people are excluded from representation by districting decisions.

5. **STATE/TRIBAL RELATIONSHIP:** The state of Montana needs to place a higher priority on creating good relationships with tribes and Indian people. While this has been the ostensible role of the Coordinator of Indian Affairs for a long time, the office has traditionally been understaffed and underfunded. In addition, the fact that the coordinator reports directly to the Governor has introduced political pressure which makes the kind of advocacy necessary to the position difficult. This arrangement also makes continuity difficult, causing turnover with changing administrations.

State government should recognize that money and effort invested in improving the relationship between Tribes and neighboring jurisdictions will result in savings by avoiding costly litigation and continuing community controversy. The best mechanism to do this would be a more autonomous and better sustained office of the coordinator.

The state should establish a commission on Indian Affairs which is autonomous but administratively attached to the Governor's office. The members of the commission should be appointed both by the Indian community and by the Governor. The Coordinator of Indian Affairs should be accountable to the commission. The following is a minimum recommendation for staff:

- Commissioner responsible for management of the office
- Information and Education Specialist responsible for training programs
- Policy Analyst responsible for proposing and evaluating policy initiatives and recommendations
- Administrative Assistant responsible for clerical functions in the office

INDEX

-A-

ACE, see All Citizens Equal
 Aid to Families with Dependent
 Children, 38
 AFL-CIO, 23
 All Citizens Equal (ACE), 7, 8, 20-21,
 22, 26-32, 34-37, 38, 40, 41, 43
 Alliance for America, 7, 22, 23, 25
 Anderson, Kermit, 20
 Aplin, C.L., 20
 Aryan Nations, 26, 31

-B-

Babcock, Tim, 25
 Baer, Larry, 39
 Balyeat, Bob, 39
 Beardsley, Hub, 9
 Big Spring, Billy, 27
 Blackfeet Reservation, 5, 8, 21
 Blevins, Tom, 34, 38, 43
 Boharski, Bill, 33
 Boyle, James, 28
 Brimstone Gold Corporation, 25
 Brock, Robert, 27
 Broers, Henry, 39
 Burke, John, 25
 Burns, Conrad, 25, 36, 40-41

-C-

Campbell, Ben Night Horse, 41
 Carto, Willis, 27
 CERA, see Citizens Equal Rights
 Alliance
 Christian Coalition, 25, 33
 Christian Identity, 26, 27
 Citizens Equal Rights Alliance (CERA),
 7, 22-23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 38, 42, 43
 Citizens League for Civil Rights, 17
 Citizens Rights Organization (CRO), 8,
 17, 22, 26, 31
 Civil Liberties for South Dakota
 Citizens, 14
 Cochrane, John, 12, 17, 20, 30, 32
 Concerned Landowners Association, 8,
 44
 Concerned Signatories of the Bison
 Range, 36, 37, 39
 Coriell, Earl, 20
 Courteau, Frank, 22
 Covey, Bill, 22, 26, 28, 30, 31
 Covey, Gene, 22, 27, 30, 31
 Cramer, John, 26, 28, 30, 32, 33, 34, 38,
 43
 Cramer, Shirley, 30, 34, 43

CRO, see Citizens Rights Organization
 Crow Reservation, 5, 8, 31, 38

-D-

Deardorff, Slim, 15
 Drake, Art, 9
 Duval, Carol, 39

-E-

Eagle Forum, 33
 East Slope Taxpayer's Association, 8,
 21, 22, 26, 27, 30, 43
 Eggebrecht, Joel, 16
 Ellena, Frank, 26, 27, 28
 Engel, Ed, 27
 Evans, Boyd, 30

-F-

Farm Bureau, 16, 25
 Finzel, Roger, 16
 Fisher, Amy, 36
 Flathead Lakers, 12, 17
 Flathead Reservation, 5, 7, 9, 12, 20, 26,
 27, 28, 30, 42
 Flathead Reservation Human Rights
 Coalition, 26, 28
 Flathead Residents Earning Equality
 (FREE), 9-10, 19, 27
 "Fly In For America," 23
 Fort Belknap Reservation, 5, 24
 Fort Peck Grazing Association, 16
 Fort Peck Reservation, 5, 17
 Foust, Everitt, 12
 FREE, see Flathead Residents Earning
 Equality
 Freedom Fellowship Forum, 26
 Freeman, Jack, 14, 16
 French, John, 12

-G-

General Allotment Act of 1887, 7
 Gervais, Bob, 31
 Gorton, Slade, 14, 25, 40, 42
 Grant, Dana, 42
 Gray, Howard, 14
 Green, Dick, 12, 36, 38
 Greenshields, Richard, 20
 Greystar Resources, 25
 Gritz, Bo, 27

-H-

Hanson, Howard, 22

Harding, Ethel, 36
 Hauptman, Thomas, 25
 Hellgate Treaty, 18
 Hill, Vincent, 22
 Holden, Lloyd, 16
 Hoyt, Kay, 20, 30
 Hubbard, Cal, 12
 Hutchin, Mike, 20
 Huyser, Joleen, 27, 28

-I-

ICERR, see Interstate Congress for
 Equal Rights and Responsibilities
 Ingraham, Lloyd, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17,
 37
 Institute for Historical Review, 28
 Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and
 Responsibilities (ICERR), 7, 14, 15,
 20

-J-

Jacobsen, Mary Lee, 20, 21, 22, 27, 30,
 43
 Jacobson, Shirley, 20, 26, 28
 Jeffers, Hale, 17, 22, 31
 Jennings, Jim, 9
 Johnson, Ralph, 20, 30, 43
 Joliffe, Arlee, 43
 Joliffe, Lynne, 17
 Jore, Rick, 32-33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 42
 Judge, Don, 23

-K-

Kaufmann, Christine, 30
 Keenan, Bob, 36
 Kenmille, Laurence, 31
 Keogh, Charles, 22
 KHG Operating Company, 25
 Kicking Horse Job Corp Center, 4
 Ku Klux Klan, 3, 26, 27

-L-

Lake, Leroy, 20
 Lambeth, Bob, 12
 Langston, F.A., 12
 Lawrence, William J., 42
 LeDesky, Wayne, 9
 Leishman, Wes, 12
 Liberty Lobby, 27
 Lindburg, Paul, 12, 23
 Lister, David, 28
 Lockman, William, 6

-M-

Mackay, Dwight, 40
 Marchildon, Ralph, 17
 Marcussen, Lana, 22
 Marine, Dick, 28
 Maxwell, Phil, 12, 20
 McClure, David, 25
 McClure, Vi, 21
 McCoy, Allen, 12
 McDaniel, W.E., 20
 McDaniels, Red, 12
 McNeil, C.B., 33
 Mercer, John, 29, 31, 32, 36, 39
 Metcalf, Jack, 13
 Metcalf, Lee, 12
 Mikkelsen, Ken, 9
 Miller, Nilah, 20, 26, 27, 28
 Mitchell, Charlotte, 22, 38
 Mitchell, Jim, 22, 38
 MOD, see Montanans Opposing
 Discrimination
 Mohr, Gregory, 32
 Montana Human Rights Network, 20,
 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 38, 42
 Montana Magistrates Association, 32
 Montana Power Company, 25
 Montana's Stockgrowers Association,
 16, 31, 40
 Montanans Opposing Discrimination
 (MOD), 7, 8, 11, 12-13, 14, 15-
 18, 19, 26, 27, 36, 37, 40
 Montieth, Diane, 26, 31
 Montieth, John, 28, 31
 Morris, Lisa, 33, 34, 35-37, 38, 39, 40,
 37, 38-39, 39, 42, 43
 Mountain States Legal Foundation, 23,
 24-25
 Muldrow, William, 16
 Mutchler, Earl, 20

-N-

Natelson, Rob, 35, 36, 39
 National Bison Range, 34, 35-37, 40
 Native American Press, 42
 Northern Cheyenne, 5

-O-

O'Connor, Dallas, 16
 O'Neil, Jerry, 42
Ojibwe News, 42, 46, 48, 49
 Ostrom, George, 18, 20
 Otter, Lucille, 4

-PQ-

Pablo, Mickey, 28
 Palmer, Del, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 19, 20, 27,
 30, 32, 32, 34, 38, 41, 43
 Palmer, Skip, 33, 34, 38, 43
 Peters, Pete, Pastor, 27
 Peterson, Darrel, 43
 Pheiffer, Wally, 22
 Phillips, Howard, 38
 Phillips, Waldo, 9, 10
 Pisoneault, Dick, 31
 Populist Party, 27
 Posse Comitatus, 15, 25
 Prouse, Wes, 39
 Purley, Bill, 12

-R-

Racicot, Marc, Governor, 36, 39
 Rathert, Nancy, 16
 Raykowski, Harvey, 17
 Read, Angie, 36
 Reid, Richard, 16, 17
 Republicans in Name Only (RINO), 38-
 39
 Retrocession, 30-32
 Richard, Gary, 27
 RINO, see Republicans in Name Only
 Roberts, Keith, 26, 27
 Rockwell, F.W., 14, 30
 Rockwell, Wayne, 20
 Rocky Boy Reservation, 5
 Roller, Luella, 20, 26, 34
 Rovig, David, 25
 Rupe, Jack, 28
 Russell, Angela, 31
 Ryan, Stan, 30, 32, 33, 43

-S-

Sage, David, 16
 Sage, Kenny, 16
 Sagebrush Rebellion, 15
 Salmon/Steelhead Preservation Act for
 Washinton Now (S/SPAWN), 14
 Schwinden, Ted, 30
 Scott, Dan, 28
 Scott, Tom, 16
 Scriptures for America, 28
 Sellers, Dan, 32
 Shapel, David, 33
 Shapel, Phonacelle, 33
 Shields, Caleb, 16
 Shook, Sandra, 33, 39, 43
 Shortridge, Judy, 42
 Smith, Darrel, 22

Smith, Pat, 32
Spotlight, The, 28
 Starkel, Vic, 13
 State Grange Association, 16
 Stickney, Arwood, 32
 Stensiand, John, 16
 Stephens, Stan, 30
 Stipe, Dave, 36, 42
 Stokes, John, 36, 38, 39
 Swaney, Rhonda, 40

-T-

Tanaka, Hidetoshi, Reverend, 28
 Taylor, Mike, 39
 TEA, see Totally Equal Americans
 Tompkins, Clyde, 12
 Tongate, Butch, 22
 Toole, Ken, 3, 4, 26, 27, 28
 Totally Equal Americans (TEA), 7, 20
 Tribal Hunting Permit, 9, 30, 32-33
 Tribal Self-Determination Act of 1992,
 35

-U-

Union Property Owners of Washington
 (UPOW), 13
 U.S. Taxpayers Party, 38
 U.S. Taxpayers Striving for
 Treatment as Such, 37, 39

-V-

Valley Missions Inc., 35
 Vincent, Bruce, 22
 Vincent, Wade, 12, 18
 Voting Rights, 24-25, 44

-W-

Wagner, Richard, 16
 Walters, Allen, 39
 Watt, James, 24
 Weber, John, 34
 Winter, Teri, 30
 Wise Use Movement, 7, 15, 22, 23, 24,
 39
 Wolf, Burt, 16
 World Church of the Creator, 15, 32

-XYZ-

Zemple, Bud, 12, 13
 Zeskind, Leonard, 28

Montana Human Rights Network



*Dedicated to promoting
democratic principles*

Equality, Justice, & Freedom

The Montana Human Rights Network is a non-profit organization based out of Helena, Montana. MHRN was founded in the late 1980s in response to white supremacist groups. Communities began forming local human rights groups to counter these hate groups. In the spring of 1990, these local organizations came together to form the Montana Human Rights Network. MHRN is dedicated to protecting everyone's right to participate in the democratic process. If you are interested in joining MHRN, please contact us.

Montana Human Rights Network

P.O. Box 1222

Helena, MT 59624

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