

IWGIA

INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS
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IWGIA IS A NONPOLITICAL AND NONRELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION
CONCERNED WITH THE OPPRESSION OF ETHNIC GROUPS
IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES

Newsletter no. 4. July 1972

This Newsletter is being distributed together with DOCUMENT no. 6, René Fuerst: Bibliography of the Indigenous Problem and Policy of the Brazilian Amazon Region (1957-1972), (price for non-members US \$ 1.00) and DOCUMENT no. 7, Bernard Arcand: The Urgent Situation of the Cuiva Indians of Columbia, (price for non-members US \$ 0.50). DOCUMENT no. 6 is a joint publication with AMAZIND. See below for information on AMAZIND.

Because of the organizational problems listed below we are unable to keep our promise in the May Newsletter to publish a longer Newsletter with more detailed information about our present activities, assistance projects, other organizations and recent publications.

Unfortunately we again have to inform our members of the financial difficulties which continually restrict the activities of the IWGIA secretariat. The increasing number of individual and institutional members admittedly means an increase in the resources at our disposal. But at the same time our activities (the IWGIA DOCUMENT series, inquiries and applications from members, assistance projects, discussions with visitors) have expanded to such an extent that the financial basis derived from membership alone is utterly inadequate for running a secretariat, whose members are increasingly forced to regard their IWGIA involvement as more than a full-time job.

After renewed contacts with the Norwegian Secretary of Foreign Affairs, IWGIA again received two small grants, one in May from the Ministry and another in June from the Norwegian Agency for International Development. These grants will make it possible to publish three more reports in the IWGIA DOCUMENT series.

We have submitted a great number of applications for financial support of our various activities to the governments of the Scandinavian countries, and to both national and international funds. While we are waiting for responses to these requests, we will urge all our members to help us create a more solid financial basis for this organization.

We propose that each member try to recruit at least two new members for IWGIA before the end of this year. Furthermore, we ask all our colleagues to make serious efforts to get their respective institutions to subscribe to institutional membership. This appeal of course also includes the many libraries found on the university campuses.

Enclosed you will again find a Reply Letter, which you may copy and distribute to your friends. ✓ New Manuscripts for the IWGIA DOCUMENT Series are steadily coming to the secretariat. At present we have under consideration or in direct preparation for publication interesting reports from Peru, Paraguay, Venezuela and Sweden. It is sad to state that at present we do not have the means to publish all these reports, although we know, that they may have a considerable impact on national as well as international opinion.

We are glad to announce that IWGIA DOCUMENT no. 8 will be Stefano Varese's report: The Forest Indians in the Present Political Situation of Peru.

DOCUMENT no. 3: Aboriginal Land Rights

Some statements on the situation of the North American Indians in DOCUMENT no. 3 have been criticized by representatives of North American Indian Groups. In reaction to this criticism the author of DOCUMENT no. 3, A. Barrie Pittock, has written to IWGIA:

"I hope nothing I have written can be used against the Indian peoples of USA or Canada, and to make this doubly sure I am only too willing to qualify my discussion of their affairs. Perhaps it would help to alter the last paragraph on p. 17 as follows: "... an Indian Lands act which would, at least in theory, grant full Indian control and ownership of reserve land. While this official statement on Indian Policy was rejec-

ted by the Indian People of Canada as inadequate, particularly in regard to communal ownership, it provides an interesting contrast with the official Australian situation. It reads, in part.....".

Further on p. 19, line 8 could be altered to read "If this statement can be accepted at its face value, it reveals a crucial difference ...".

As regards my reference to trusteeship on p. 17, line 38, I suggest the following:"In both the United States and Canada, the Governments hold title to Indian lands essentially as trustees, however much this trust may have been and continues to be violated. As and when white paternalism is overcome, justice will require the handing over of actual control and ownership to the Indian People themselves.

Indeed this was the original intention behind...."

In self-defence, it should be said that I was writing originally to further Aboriginal rights here in Australia, and without thought of World-wide distribution and possible misuse in the US and Canada. The qualifications which I have now added were in fact in my mind all along but seemed unnecessarily detailed and confusing for an Australian audience. However the world grows smaller, and I must be more careful in the future! From my time in the US I realise that it is hard for Indians to believe, but the fact is that the situation of the Aboriginal people here in Australia is in theory and in practice considerably worse than that of the Indians:

While US and Canadian Indians do not all have rights secured by treaty, and many treaty rights have been broken, they should consider the plight of a people who have no such treaty rights whatsoever. Thus the Senecas eventually received some compensation over the Kinzua Dam, but compensation has never been even considered anywhere in Australia because Aborigines are considered to "have no rights" to be compensated for.

While US and Canadian governments say that they hold Indian lands "in trust", the Indians should give thought to a people whose white government says there is no such thing as aboriginal land -- only land which Aborigines are allowed to use and occupy until such time as they can be "assimilated" into white working class society. The natives of Alaska got nearly US \$ 1000

million and 40 million acres recently. If they had lived in Australia they would have got precisely nothing, like the Yirrkala people and a hundred tribes before them.

While US and Canadian Indians complain that their tribal governments lack effective power and are often manipulated and used by whites, they should consider Aborigines whose tribal governments have been completely destroyed, or at best gone unrecognised throughout the history of white invasion. The US Indian infant mortality rate is about twice the white, which is terrible. In Australia the Aboriginal infant mortality rate is 10 to 5 times that of the whites.

Aborigines and their white friends are at times guilty of idealising the US and Canadian situations, or at least of selectively quoting the best and glossing over the worst, in order to apply some small leverage on white consciences in Australia. Sometimes, however, I cannot help feeling that many US and Canadian Indians don't realise how well off they are compared to the Australian Aborigines.

I am genuinely sorry if my writing has caused IWGIA or the US and Canadian Indians any embarrassment, and I look forward to increasing co-operation both with IWGIA and with the Indian peoples in the future. We must work together. I would welcome any further comments on my writings either via yourself or direct from the people concerned...".

AMAZIND

DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION CENTER FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS IN THE AMAZON
REGION

Specialized agency of the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs

René Fuerst, the author of AMAZIND/IWGIA DOCUMENT no. 6:

Bibliography of the Indigenous Problem and Policy of the Brazilian Amazon Region (1957-1972), is an expert on the Indians of the Brazilian Amazon Region, among whom he spent almost nine years from 1961 to 1969 as an ethnologist and indigenist. René Fuerst has been a technical advisor to the missions of the International Red Cross and the Anti-Slavery Society in 1972.

René Fuerst is the manager of AMAZIND, which was founded in January 1972. The other active members of AMAZIND are Arlette Detruche and Isabella Rûf, who have practical experience in Brazil and Peru.

The present activities of AMAZIND comprise the collection and analysis and publishing of relevant material on the indigenous problem of the Brazilian Amazon region and on government policy in this area, in order to enable competent groups or individuals to intercede with the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), the only responsible protection and assistance agency in Brazil. The most immediate project of AMAZIND is a report (on the present situation of the Indians of the Brazilian Amazon Region), which will include a complete and detailed tribal census of the indigenous population of this area. In accordance with this project René Fuerst is presently participating in the Aborigines Protection Society mission to Brazil.

The adress of AMAZIND is: Rue des Sources 17. CH-1205 Geneva, Switzerland.

ABORIGINES PROTECTION SOCIETY MISSION TO BRAZIL, 1972

The Aborigines Protection Society, which is incorporated in the Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights, is sending a mission to spend August and September visiting Amerindian tribes at the invitation of the Brazilian government. Its

purpose is to assess the present condition of the Amerindian peoples and to offer to the government any suggestions regarding improvements that may seem desirable .

The members of the mission are: Dr. Edwin Brooks, senior lecture in geography, René Fuerst, ethnologist, John Hemming, publisher, and Francis Huxley, social anthropologist. Their report will be published by the Society.