IWGIA Document

Douglas E. Sanders

The Formation of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples

29

IWGIA Document
ISSN 0105 - 4503

IWGIA – International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs – is a non-political and non-religious organization concerned with the oppression of ethnic groups in various countries.

IWGIA DOCUMENTS can be obtained through subscription or can be purchased separately. The subscription fee for 1977 for individuals is US $ 12.00 (60 D.kr.) or the equivalent in other currencies. The subscription fee for institutions is US $ 24.00 (120 D.kr.) or the equivalent in other currencies. Please, make your check or international money order payable to:

The International Secretariat of IWGIA
Frederiksholms Kanal 4A
DK-1220 Copenhagen K
Denmark

Douglas E. Sanders

THE FORMATION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Copenhagen 1977

Douglas E. Sanders, Professor of Law at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, has been teaching in the area of native law at several Canadian universities. In 1971-72 professor Sanders taught one of the first Canadian courses on law and native people at the Faculty of Law at the University of Windsor. After having been professor of Law at the Native Law Centre, Carleton University, Ottawa, he moved to British Columbia in 1974, working with the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, at their Land Claims Research Centre in Victoria.

Douglas E. Sanders is a member of the bar of British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and the Northwest Territories, and has been active as counsel for Indian organizations in a number of cases involving Indian rights. He was one of the counsel involved in the land claims case brought in 1973 by the Indian chiefs of the Northwest Territories, a case which he is referring to in IWGIA Document No. 14. On April 15, 1976, professor Sanders in his testimony to the Berger Inquiry presented an extensive analysis of the legal and historical

theory and practice in respect to the recognition of native title.

For many years Douglas E. Sanders was a legal advisor to the National Indian Brotherhood of Canada, under the Presidency of George Manuel. This is his vantage point for the present paper on the formation of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.

Professor Sanders has published many books and papers on native law and on the historical and philosophical background of present native land claims. He has frequently participated in international conferences and seminars, bringing him to many parts of the world, e.g. Australia and New Guinea. This has given him a broad international perspective on the situation of indigenous peoples. His work has been extended to include visits to and study of the problems of law and economic development in relation to indigenous peoples in South and Central America.

Douglas E. Sanders is one of IWGIA's main legal advisors. The present paper has been written especially for the IWGIA Document series.

Copenhagen, August 1977.

The International Secretariat of IWGIA

CONTENTS

Introduction.............................. 5
The Early Experiments..................... 6
Canadian Internationalism................. 9
The Background of George Manuel...........10
The Conference............................14
Work Since 1975...........................18
Observations..............................20
Footnotes.................................27

Colonialism is an international activity and the foundations of international law were developed in the period of western European colonial expansion. Yet, once European sovereignty had been established over various parts of the world, each European colonial power regarded the affairs of the colonized area as "domestic" and "internal". This meant that indigenous rights were to be governed solely by the political and legal system of the particular colonial power.

Colonialism was international for indigenous peoples in two ways. Not only did it involve contact with European nationals, but it grouped various indigenous nations within new political boundaries. Differing indigenous peoples were put in a common situation vis-a-vis the new governments established by colonialism. They learned that to act solely on the basis of tribal groups was ineffective. Their efforts would be dismissed as disunited. To effect change in this new situation, alliances of indigenous peoples within the new national boundaries promised to be more effective.

Western European colonialism claimed for itself a body of legal and religious principles. Within European colonial experience there were contradictions between theory and practice. After exterminating the Indian populations of the Carribean islands, Spain commissioned Franciscus de Vittoria to study the rights of the American Indians.

Following his report, protections to Indian life and property were written into the Laws of the Indies and the Papal Bull, Sublimus Deus. But the "black legend" of Spanish colonialism continued, even after these principled changes.

The contradictions between theory and practice in western European colonialism suggested to indigenous populations that they could influence the European powers by political and legal agitation. It was, at best, an uncertain alternative to other forms of resistence. This type of indigenous political activity began within particular colonial systems. It expanded to the sphere of international organizations when the League of Nations and the United Nations were formed. In the last decade it has led to the formation of an international organization, the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, which has established a formal relationship to the United Nations and is seeking to have concepts of aboriginal rights accepted internationally as basic economic and political rights of indigenous peoples.

THE EARLY EXPERIMENTS

No single source has drawn together descriptions of the various delegations which went to Europe seeking a hearing in the metropolitan centre. We can note certain examples within English colonialism.

New Zealand Maori delegations travelled to England to meet with the Queen or King in 1882, 1884, 1914 and 1924.[1] The first two

delegations were both referred back to the New Zealand government. The third delegation had an audience with King George V. In 1924, T. W. Ratana, a Maori political and religious figure, failed to get an audience with the King and returned to New Zealand to say he had been treated as a beggar.

In 1906 three important chiefs from British Columbia went to England to meet King Edward VII. A second British Columbia delegation visited the King in 1909 after an attempt had been made to dispossess some Indians near Prince Rupert. The Nishga tribe had a law firm in London, England, draw up a petition, as a basis for a hearing before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England (a body which served as the final court of appeal for the whole British Empire). The petition was forwarded to the Canadian government in 1913 and to English authorities in 1918.[2]

These attempts to make contact with the imperial authorities with the hope of redress of grievances all had the appearance of failure. Whether the King granted an audience or not, the result was much the same. At best the delegations were politely advised to return home and deal with the local governments.

Yet the imperial authorities might intervene in native policy questions if hostilities were threatened. The fear of imperial intervention in New Zealand Maori politics has been cited as a reason for the establishment of the four Maori seats in the New Zealand Parliament in 1867 (during the period of the land wars). In the 19th century English politicans were pressured by the Anti-Slavery Society and the

Aborigines Protection Society on native policy questions. The agitation led to a special Committee of the English House of Commons on aborigines which reported in 1837. The English Colonial Secretary wrote to the officials in the colony of Vancouver's Island in 1858 stating:

> ...feelings of this country would be strongly opposed to the adoption of any arbitrary or oppressive measures towards (the native Indians).

Because of the sensitivity of native questions, the English Imperial government retained formal control over that aspect of colonial policy after it transferred most other matters to local control.[3]

While the indigenous delegations to England inevitably failed to attain their short term goals, they rightly saw the more distant imperial authorities as potential allies in their disputes with local settler populations. It was possible to argue their case internationally (though within a colonial empire).

With the establishment of the League of Nations it was logical for indigenous peoples to explore the possibility of League support for their grievances. Representatives of the Iroquois Confederacy travelled to Geneva in the 1930's. They succeeded in having a resolution introduced in the forum of the League of Nations, but no debate or vote occured. In 1924, after his unsuccessful attempt to meet King George in England, T. W. Ratana sought help from the League of Nations for the Maoris. On his return trip to New Zealand, he stopped in Japan to witness the life of a coloured independent nation.

CANADIAN INTERNATIONALISM

The model of New Zealand Maori policy has been raised in Canada a number of times. Apparently it was first raised by Indian leaders as a successful example of special legal status. Rev. Peter Kelly, a Haida Indian from the west coast of Canada, referred to the special Maori seats in the New Zealand Parliament in his testimony before a special Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons in Canada in the late 1940's. In 1970 Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada visited New Zealand and on his return to Canada praised New Zealand policy to a national delegation of Canadian Indians who were assembled to protest his government's policy proposals. His Minister of Indian Affairs, Jean Chretien, visited New Zealand and Australia the next year together with George Manuel, President of the National Indian Brotherhood, Len Marchand, an Indian member of the Canadian Parliament, Bill Mussell, an Indian special assistant to the Minister and other non-Indians. Early in 1972 a federal government commissioner, appointed to investigate the question of Canadian Indian land claims, visited both Australia and New Zealand.

Canadians were re-examining native policy in a comparative framework, though the frame of reference was limited to the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Canada was not a member of the Organization of American States and did not participate actively in the Inter-American Indian Institute. The Department of Indian Affairs initiated a project on indigenous policies in Latin America, but ended the work after an initial study on Mexico. The work of further expanding the frame of reference fell to the indigenous people themselves.

THE BACKGROUND OF GEORGE MANUEL

George Manuel wrote after his return from New Zealand and Australia of the recognition of common experience with Moaris and Australian Aborigines: He said

> I hope that the common history and shared values that we discovered in each other are only the seeds from which some kind of lasting frame-work can grow for a common alliance of Native Peoples.[4]

The idea was already clear in his mind that an international conference of indigenous peoples should be held.

George Manuel was a member of the Shushwap Tribe from the interior of British Columbia. He had grown up in an area with a strong tradition of Indian political activity. His mentor was a dynamic Indian leader, Andrew Paull, the founder and head of an organization called the North American Indian Brotherhood (NAIB). The NAIB attempted to be national and even international. It's letterhead listed leaders from various parts of Canada and a few from the United States. While the primary political focus of the organization was regional, it aspired to a far wider political role. In the 1950's the NAIB sent three British Columbia Indians and a non-Indian lawyer to New York to make representations to the United Nations. Like the other historic delegations they were advised to return to Canada and work with the "domestic" legal and political framework of "their" country.

George Manuel's political development took him through the NAIB and into national Indian politics in Canada. He served three

terms as head of the National Indian Brotherhood of Canada (1970-1976). He travelled to New Zealand and Australia in 1971. In 1972 he was an adviser with the Canadian delegation to the United Nations conference on the environment in Stockholm. A leading Stockholm newspaper arranged for him to visit the Sami areas of northern Sweden, opening up new contact between indigenous peoples. Following the Stockholm conference he visited the International Labour Organization and the World Council of Churches in Geneva, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) in Copenhagen and Survival International and the Anti-Slavery Society in London. In Copenhagen he announced his plan for a world conference of indigenous peoples, in a press conference attended by press from Scandinavia and from some of the leading European newspapers and press agencies. He attended the 10th anniversary celebrations of Tanzania as an invited guest of the nation. He initiated a working relationship with the National Congress of American Indians in the United States and began the planning work for an international conference. He was committed to the principle that indigenous people must themselves organize and control the conference. No no-indigenous support group, no matter how well motivated, would be the hosting or organizing body.

In August, 1972, the General Assembly of the National Indian Brotherhood endorsed the idea of an international conference of indigenous peoples and authorized the National Indian Brotherhood to apply for Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) status at the United Nations.

The first preparatory meeting for the world conference was

held in Georgetown, Guyana, April 8th to 11th, 1974. Representatives from Australia, Canada, Colombia, Greenland (Denmark), Guyana, New Zealand, Norway (representing Norway, Finland and Sweden) and the United States attended the conference. Funding came from Church groups, including the World Council of Churches. The local arrangements were made by the government of Guyana. The meeting faced the problem of virtually instant agreement by the delegates to proceed with the proposal of the National Indian Brotherhood to hold the international conference. But the full four days of the conference were spent usefully and enjoyably. A definition of "indigenous people" was developed for the purpose of delegate status at the proposed conference:

> The term indigenous people refers to people living in countries which have a population composed of differing ethnic or racial groups who are descendants of the earliest populations living in the area and who do not as a group control the national government of the countries within which they live.

This was both a social and political definition. It did not focus on indigenous minorities, but on indigenous populations who do not control their political destinies.

Many details of organization, selection of delegates, accreditation of observers were decided upon and the invitation of the National Indian Brotherhood to host the initial conference in Canada was accepted. The Canadian initiative had been so fundamental to the process that, in reality, there could be no alternative proposal. The feeling at the preparatory meeting was uniformly positive.

In May, 1974, the National Indian Brotherhood of Canada was granted status as a Non-Governmental Organization by the Economic and

Social Council of the United Nations. NGO status was granted on the basis that there was not yet in existence an international organization of indigenous peoples. It was understood that the National Indian Brotherhood would transfer its NGO status to an international organization if one should come into existence. At the beginning of the second organizational meeting for the international conference, held in Copenhagen June 16th to 18th, 1975, Sam Deloria of the United States was able to state:

> I was privileged to make history by going to New York to the United Nations' building and depositing my credentials and receiving credentials from the Economic and Social Council representing the non-governmental organization status of the National Indian Brotherhood which is on behalf of the indigenous people of the world.
>
> ...in general terms what we are moving towards, which is already in the law but perhaps with our help will be illuminated somewhat, is the fact that the concept of national sovereignty is limited and that one limitation on the concept of national sovereignty is the existence of indigenous people...we have the right to maintain our political existence.

The Copenhagen conference dealt with funding and accreditation of delegates to the international conference. Contacts had been established with about twenty-four countries. Asia and Africa were omitted for practical organizational reasons (although attempts had been made to contact groups in the U.S.S.R., China and other parts of Asia). The policy board, as it met in Copenhagen, was composed of Neil Watene for New Zealand, Julio Tumiri Apaza for Bolivia, Trino Morales for Colombia, Charles Trimble for the United States, Aslak Nils Sara for Norway, Sweden and Finland, Robert Petersen for Greenland (Denmark), and George Manuel for Canada. Sam Deloria of the United States and

Angmalortok Olsen of Greenland also participated in the meeting. Arrangements for the meeting had been assisted by a local committee consisting of Bent Östergaard of the United Nations Association of Denmark, Hans Pavia Rosing of the Greenlandic Committee of International Cooperation, Robert Petersen of Copenhagen University and coordinated by Helge Kleivan of Copenhagen University and IWGIA, who had been asked to coordinate documentation for the international conference.

THE CONFERENCE

The international conference was held in Port Alberni, British Columbia, October 27th to 31st, 1975. Port Alberni is a small industrial town located at the head of Alberni Inlet, which opens onto the Pacific Ocean on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The meeting was hosted by the Sheshaht Band of Nootka Indians, one of the most prosperous Canadian Indian Bands. The facilities that were used had originally been a church-run government Indian school. The buildings had ceased to be used for school purposes when the federal government integrated Indian students into the regular provincial school systems. The buildings, including a dormitory and a modern gymnasium had been placed under local Indian control. The Nootka people were the first Canadian pacific coast tribe contacted by English explorers. Captain Cook landed in their territory in 1778. Traditionally the Nootka lived primarily from the sea and in 1975 they provided a lavish seafood banquet for the Sami, Inuit, Maori, Australian Aborigine and Indian people who attended the international conference.

One goal had been to hold the conference in an Indian community, on Indian land. That was achieved.

The day before the conference began, October 26th, 1975, the policy board met for the third and final time in Port Alberni to settle last minute arrangements. There was an air of great excitement as the delegations began arriving at the conference site. That evening the Sheshaht people presided at a reception, held in the auditorium of the old residential school dormitory in which the bulk of the delegates would stay.

The following countries were represented: Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Finland, Greenland (Denmark), Guatemala, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Sweden, the United States (including Hawaii) and Venezuela. Two hundred and sixty people participated in the conference, including fifty-two delegates, one hundred and thirty-five observers, twenty-five members of the press and fifty-four staff members. The Sami delegates and observers wore their richly coloured costumes during the conference. Certain of the Latin American delegates wore typical ponchos. There was a rich pride in culture which showed most clearly at the evening gatherings in the auditorium - with singing, dancing and ceremonies. The richness and diversity of the gathering was hard to absorb. There was never any doubt about the success of the conference.

The conference was opened by George Clutesi, an elder of the Sheshaht people, who sang a traditional prayer. Speeches of welcome were given by the three Canadian delegates and by the Honourable Hugh

Faulkner, Secretary of State in the Canadian government. On the first afternoon there was a presentation by Sam Deloria concerning United Nations Activity and the study underway by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Indigenous Minorities of the Commission on Human Rights of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

On Tuesday the delegates were divided into three groups. All groups were scheduled to attend five workshops over the next three days (each workshop being repeated three times). The workshops dealt with (1) representation at the United Nations, (2) the Charter of the World Council of Indigenous People, (3) social, economic and political justice, (4) retention of cultural identity, and (5) retention of land and natural resources. Each workshop had a chairman and a resource person. One of the primary purposes of the workshops was to enable delegates to get to know each other better by working in smaller groups. This process would lead to a sharing of ideas and, hopefully, make a consensus on organizational decisions much easier in the final plenary sessions of the conference. After two days of workshops it was decided to go directly back into plenary sessions on Thursday. The sense of direction in the conference was so clear that further preliminary workshops were unnecessary. All delegates realized they shared common experiences of oppression, though they varied from "mild" racial discrimination to ethnocide and genocide.

On the final two days the Charter of the new organization was debated, ammended and approved. George Manuel of Canada was elected as chairman. Sam Deloria of the United States was elected as Secretary-

General, responsible for the work at the United Nations. A board was elected consisting of Julio Dixon of Panama, representing Central America, Clemente Alcon of Bolivia, representing South America, Aslak Nils Sara of Norway, representing Europe-Greenland, and Neil Watene of New Zealand, representing the South Pacific.

A dramatic Solemn Declaration was adopted:

We the Indigenous Peoples of the world, united in this corner of our Mother the Earth in a great assembly of men of wisdom, declare to all nations:

We glory in our proud past:
when the earth was our nurturing mother,
when the night sky formed our common roof,
when Sun and Moon were our parents,
when all were brothers and sisters,
when our great civilizations grew under the sun,
when our chiefs and elders were great leaders,
when justice ruled the Law and its execution.

Then other peoples arrived:
thirsting for blood, for gold, for land and all its wealth,
carrying the cross and the sword, one in each hand,
without knowing or waiting to learn the ways of our worlds,
they considered us to be lower than the animals,
they stole our lands from us and took us from our lands,
they made slaves of the Sons of the sun.

However, they have never been able to eliminate us,
nor to erase our memories of what we were,
because we are the culture of the earth and the sky,
we are of ancient descent and we are millions,
and although our whole universe may be ravaged,
our people will live on
for longer than even the kingdom of death.

Now, we come from the four corners of the earth,
we protest before the concert of nations
that, "we are the Indigenous Peoples, we who
have a consciousness of culture and peoplehood
on the edge of each country's borders and
marginal to each country's citizenship."

And rising up after centuries of oppression,
evoking the greatness of our ancestors,

in the memory of our Indigenous martyrs,
and in homage to the counsel of our wise elders:

We vow to control again our own destiny and
recover our complete humanity and
pride in being Indigenous People.

The conference resolved to prepare a study of the problems of discrimination against Indigenous peoples for submission to the U.N. study, then underway. It resolved that the World Council would take over the NGO status obtained by the National Indian Brotherhood. Resolutions were approved dealing with economic, cultural, political and social rights and with the retention of lands and natural resources. The Government of Brazil was picked out for specific criticism as a nation carrying out policies of genocide and ethnocide. Helge Kleivan was honoured for his extensive support work.

The conference ended with great euphoria. There had been some tensions, but, on the whole, the problems had been much less than anticipated. The conference had achieved its goals and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples had been formed.

WORK SINCE 1975

In the spring of 1976 George Manuel travelled to Scandinavia to attend the biennial Sami conference in Finland. In July and August he travelled to Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Ecuador. Immediately after that trip he went to Greenland, Denmark and Norway with a Canadian government delegation headed by Hugh Faulkner, the Secretary of State. George Manuel retired as president of the National

Indian Brotherhood in September of 1976. After the General Assembly which selected his successor, he returned to his home province of British Columbia. The files of the World Council, formerly located in Ottawa in the offices of the National Indian Brotherhood, were transferred to the University of Lethbridge which agreed to provide an office for the World Council. Marie Marule, the primary organizer of the Port Alberni conference and former executive secretary to the National Indian Brotherhood, is a member of the faculty of the Native American Studies Department at the University of Lethbridge.

In February, 1977, a regional meeting in Panama led to the creation of a central American Indigenous organization to function as a regional constituent organization within the World Council. On the occasion of the regional meeting, the World Council held the first executive board meeting since the Port Alberni conference. They accepted a Sami invitation to host the next international conference. The conference is planned for Kiruna in northern Sweden in late August, 1977. It is being coordinated by Per Mikael Utsi. It has a proposed theme focusing on the situation of indigenous peoples and international agreements relating to human rights and the protection of lands.

The development of the World Council has been gradual since the Port Alberni meeting. The primary organizers, George Manuel and Marie Marule, have returned to their home areas in western Canada. Proposals for a settled administrative home for the World Council have been developed, but no permanent arrangements have yet been confirmed.

OBSERVATIONS

Many have greeted the formation of the World Council as an idea whose time has come. Perhaps it is appropriate to end this account with two questions. What is the character of the leaders and organizations which are behind the formation of the World Council? Secondly, is such an international organization a worthwhile exercise in real political terms?

The leaders and organizations that worked for the formation of the World Council cannot be classed as radical. There was approval and support from various governments and a number of church groups. The initial organizing meeting in Guyana was hosted by the Guyanese government and Prime Minister Forbes Burnham attended one of the social gatherings. The Prime Minister of Denmark gave a welcoming speech to the second organizing meeting in Copenhagen. The Canadian Secretary of State, Hugh Faulkner, welcomed delegates to the Port Alberni conference. Financial support came from the governments of Canada, Guyana, Norway and Denmark. Funds came from the World Council of Churches, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), Swedish IWGIA, the United Nations Association of Denmark, the Faculty of Humanities, Copenhagen University, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace and Oxfam Canada.

When Hugh Faulkner gave the welcoming speech in Port Alberni he spoke of his department's "core funding" program for native organizations in Canada:

> Over the past 5 years, the program has provided status Indians, non-status Indians, Metis, and Inuit with the resources, both technical and financial, to form their own organizations, to train their own leaders, and, quite frankly, to develop the kind of popular and sophisticated political base required to deal on a more equal basis with the government and the non-native peoples of this country.
>
> Although the results of the evaluation remain to be seen, my own view, drawn from my personal experience with this programme, is that it may already be judged an important success. When the programme was set up, the situation of indigenous peoples had deteriorated to an alarming extent. The ignorance of the larger society, its racist stereotypes, and its disdain for native culture and heritage had gravely undermined the pride of the native community and virtually destroyed any positive self-image in many native individuals. The programme provided the resources essential to the re-discovery by the native peoples of pride in self and pride of heritage. A crucial part of that re-discovery has been the development of an informed and articulate native leadership that could speak to the concerns of its people. This native leadership has arrived. It is strong and determined, and it has let the Government and the Canadian people know on many occasions what the real problems facing indigenous peoples in Canada are. The fact that this meeting is taking place today, and the fact that elected leaders of native organizations are able to sit down and talk with federal and provincial cabinets are in themselves important measures of the success of the program.
>
> No one would claim that the core funding program will mean an end to the grave problems facing native peoples today. What the program can do - and is already doing - is to prepare native peoples for the next crucial chapters in their history.

The core funding program had enabled the National Indian Brotherhood to function with a sizable staff. In that way it provided a base from which international organizing activity could begin - though that was not a development the government had expected. Clearly certain persons in the Canadian government thought the Indian international activity was a waste of time. Since the organizations were funded as political bodies, the government could not bring pressure on them to stop the

international activity without compromising their independence. The federal government decided to acquiesce in this unexpected Indian initiative. It is clear that the National Indian Brotherhood could not have obtained NGO status at the United Nations if the Government of Canada had objected. And, more positively, some financial assistance for the Port Alberni conference came from the federal Department of the Secretary of State.

Other delegates to the Port Alberni conference also represented organizations which had similar relationships with their national governments. The Maori delegates represented the New Zealand Maori Council, a body established by legislation which received an annual operating grant from the New Zealand government. The Australian Aboriginal representative was the head of the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NACC, also called the Aboriginal Congress) which had been created by the federal government. The members of the NACC were selected by Australian Aborigines in elections administered by the government. Sami delegates from Finland represented the Finnish Sami Parliament, an advisory body to the Finnish Government.

This pattern of government sponsored, politically autonomous indigenous organizations is fairly common today in the western industrialized countries. In the United States, with its strong tradition of private initiative, funding tends to come from the semi-public foundations, rather than from direct government grants. These funding programs constitute a recognition by governments that indigenous populations are not adequately integrated into the political life of the

nation state. Past policies aimed at political and social integration have failed. The countries have come to the conclusion that stable patterns of political accomodation cannot be achieved without the existence of indigenous political leaders able and willing to participate in the political life of the nation. The funding programs are designed to make that leadership possible. They represent a recognition that indigenous populations have survived as distinct political communities within the nation state and a discarding of the view that integration and assimilation are the only possible "solutions" to the "problem".

The cumulative effect of funding programs, in a number of countries, made the international conference possible. They were a necessary precondition, but not in themselves sufficient. Leadership had to come from some quarter. It came from Canada and George Manuel, a political figure who developed out of the strong Indian political tradition in British Columbia. The international conference brought together delegates from countries with policies which supported indigenous organizations with public or semi-public funding and delegates from countries where indigenous people might be recognized by governments as peasants or workers, but not as politically distinct groups within the nation. The divisions in the conference were clearly along those lines. The Sami, the North American Indians, the Inuit, the Maoris and the Australian Aborigines could understand each others situation quite easily. But the relationships between those groups and their national governments were paradoxical, perhaps incomprehensible to the delegates from most of Latin America. Correspondingly, the political tension within which

Indian organizations functioned in Latin America was difficult for the other delegates to appreciate. Perhaps it was most graphically conveyed when it was learned that people who had attended the Port Alberni meeting had faced imprisonment and, in at least one case, torture after their return to Latin America. The basic elements of indigenous culture were mutually understood - but the political differences between governments in Latin America and the industrialized west had given the two groups of delegates radically different experiences with national governments.

These factors seem to explain why the initiative for the World Council came from North America and Europe, though the crisis area for indigenous people is clearly in the hinterland of Latin America. There have been long struggles by Indian people in Latin America to gain political power and protect their peoples. But the resources were not available to them to internationalize the struggle through the formation of an international body.

The early delegations to England from British Columbia and New Zealand were experiments in political action. It can be argued that the delegations mistook the locus of power. They relied on colonial myths and symbols, misunderstanding the realities of the political system with which they had to deal. Will the work of the World Council, accredited to the United Nations, simply prove to be another symbolic exercise that cannot produce results? It may be that forty years ago, or even ten years ago, an international indigenous peoples organization could have had no real political role. The United Nations and its members

always refused to discuss any question which was classified as "domestic" or "internal". That strict rule is now being modified. The United Nations sanctions against South Africa and Rhodesia treat certain "domestic" policies as a proper subject for international action. Currently, as a result of the Helsinki agreements and the new Carter Administration in the United States, we have seen strong statements from both the United States and England that human rights questions are not the prerogative of individual nation states. While the United States has directed these declarations mainly against the U.S.S.R., it has also picked out examples of the abuse of human rights in Latin America, particularly in Chile. There has already been a defensive reaction in Latin America to this shift in U.S. Policy. Whatever precise developments occur on these questions, we are in a period of increased international concern with "internal" human rights questions. This is creating a more favourable international atmosphere for a body such as the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.

This trend has affected many countries. In April, 1977, the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs presented a report in Parliament on the international protection of human rights. It referred to

> ...the increasing concern and attention in the last few years about the vulnerable situation in which many indigenous people live. It is a question of minorities that are not in control of sufficient resources to protect their interests and maintain their traditional forms of life.

The report commented favourably on the work of the World Council and IWGIA.

Most governments are concerned, to some extent, with their international image. This will be increasingly true if the U.S. continues to tie foreign aid to human rights considerations. When Australia wanted a seat on the United Nations Security Council it was fearful that aboriginal protests about racism would cost Australia third world votes at the U.N.. The international protests about the closing of the Marandu project and the arrests of Marilyn Renfelt and Miguel Chase-Sardi clearly influenced the Government of Paraguay. Both were later released. More recently, the release of Constantino Lima from prison in Bolivia and his exile to Canada occurred after international protests and representations from governments like Denmark and Norway.

The formation of the World Council will not lead to automatic victories, but it has developed a sense of political relatedness among groups scattered across much of the world. In her report on the Port Alberni conference, Marie Marule stated:

> In all, according to a rough estimate made at the Conference, it was calculated that between thirty to thirty-five million indigenous people were represented at the First International Conference of Indigenous Peoples, and now represented by the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.

Abstract goals of strength and solidarity come to seem more possible. Angmalortok Olsen of Greenland, at the beginning of the preparatory meeting in Guyana in 1974, said:

> ...it has dawned upon us that even though we sit in the far corner of the world, there is a movement through the whole world of ideas and of peoples and it seems to us that maybe we could do our little bit to humanise the present world as it is.

FOOTNOTES

1. Information on the New Zealand delegations is found in G. W. Rusden, Aureretanga: Groans of the Maoris, London, William Ridgeway, 1888; J. A. Qilliams, Politics of the New Zealand Maori, Protest and Cooperation, 1891-1909, Oxford University Press for the University of Auckland, 1969; J. M. Henderson, Ratana; The Man, the Church, the Political Movement, A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1972 (2nd edition), Wellington.

2. Information on the Canadian delegations is found in LaViolette, The Struggle for Survival, University of Toronto Press, 1961; Manuel and Posluns, The Fourth World, An Indian Reality, Collier-Macmillan Canada, 1974.

3. English Colonial policy was initially decentralized except for commercial matters. Frontier problems in North America in the mid-18th Century led to a centralization of indigenous policy in the imperial government. Control over indigenous policy for Upper Canada (Ontario) was formally retained by the imperial government until 186o, long after the transfer of most internal governmental powers to the local legislature. It appears that the tradition of centralized imperial control may have naturally led to the decision in 1867 to place Indian policy with the Canadian federal government, rather than with the provinces.

4. Report of the National Indian Brotherhood's Tour of New Zealand and Australia, National Indian Brotherhood, Ottawa, 1971 at page 26. See also George Manuel's paper, Canadian Indians and Maoris Share Common Problems, pp. 10-18, in The Northian, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1975, Journal of the Society for Indian and Northern Education, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.

The previous reports in this series are:

No. 1 Declaration of Barbados
No. 2 Karl Eric Knutson: Report from Eritrea
No. 3 A. Barrie Pittock: Aboriginal Land Rights
No. 4 Rupert R. Moser: The Situation of the Adivasis of Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas, Bihar, India
No. 5 John H. Bodley: Tribal Survival in the Amazon: The Campa Case
No. 6 René Fuerst: Bibliography of the Indigenous Problem and Policy of the Brazilian Amazon Region (1957-1972)
No. 7 Bernard Arcand: The Urgent Situation of the Cuiva Indians of Colombia
No. 8 Stefano Varese: The Forest Indians in the Present Political Situation of Peru
No. 9 Walter Coppens: The Anatomy of a Land Invasion Scheme in Yekuana Territory, Venezuela
No. 10 Henning Siverts: Tribal Survival in the Alto Marañon: The Aguaruna Case
No. 11 Mark Münzel: The Aché Indians: Genocide in Paraguay
No. 12 Nelly Arvelo Jiménez: The Dynamics of the Ye'cuana ("Maquiritare") Political System: Stability and Crisis
No. 13 Carmen Junqueira: The Brazilian Indigenous Problem and Policy: The Example of the Xingu National Park
No. 14 Douglas Sanders: Native people in Areas of Internal National Expansion: Indians and Inuit in Canada
No. 15 Alicia Barabas and Miguel Bartolomé: Hydraulic Development and Ethnocide: The Mazatec and Chinantec People of Oaxaca, Mexico
No. 16 Richard Chase Smith: The Amuesha People of Central Peru: Their Struggle to Survive
No. 17 Mark Münzel: The Aché: Genocide Continues in Paraguay
No. 18 Jürgen Riester: Indians of Eastern Bolivia: Aspects of their Present Situation
No. 19 Jean Chiappino: The Brazilian Indigenous Problem and Policy: The Aripuana Park
No. 20 Bernardo Berdichewsky: The Araucanian Indians in Chile
No. 21 Nemesio J. Rodriguez: Oppression in Argentina: The Mataco Case
No. 22 Jacques Lizot: The Yanomami in the Face of Ethnocide
No. 23 Norman E. Whitten, Jr: Ecuadorian Ethnocide and Indigenous Ethnogenesis: Amazonian Resurgence Amidst Andean Colonialism
No. 24 Torben Monberg: The Reactions of People of Bellona Island towards a Mining Project
No. 25 Felix Razon and Richard Hensman: The Oppression of the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines
No. 26 Peter A. Cumming: Canada : Native Land Rights and Northern Development
No. 27 Peter Kloos: The Akuriyo of Surinam : A Case of Emergence from Isolation
No. 28 Ernesto Salazar : An Indian Federation in Lowland Ecuador

© Copyright 1977 by
International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.
All rights reserved.

J. J. TRYKTEKNIK A/S