



Department of Labor

By Oliver Pilat

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The CIO is going to bat for the American Indian.

It is extremely doubtful that many, if any, of the country's 400,000 reservation Indians pay dues to the CIO, but that does not exclude labor interest in their welfare, any more than Sen. Murray (D-Mont.) is barred from an interest in Zionism by the fact that few Jews are included among his constituents.

Leo Perlis, director of the CIO Community Services Committee, has been in touch with the Interior Dept. and other governmental agencies in behalf of the Indian Care Committee, and has taken a role in ARROW, an organization sponsored by former Rep. Will Rogers Jr. (D-Cal.). ARROW's full name is the American Restitution and Righting Old Wrongs Committee.

Perlis points out that the Indians live in occupied territories under pacts with the government, but are treated with less finesse and humanitarianism than our former enemies, the Germans and Japs. The Indian rate of tuberculosis is almost as high as that in Eastern Europe, and the Indian infant mortality rate can only be compared with that in China.

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The gap between Indian welfare and organized labor in the U. S. is easily bridged by Perlis' committee, which serves as a sort of CIO ambassador to the community. (The AFL had a similar committee for a while, but it seems to have faded into semi-obscure).

During the war the Community Services Committee raised approximately \$150,000,000 for relief and welfare purposes, of which \$30,000,000 was spent overseas, including special labor projects in Europe and Asia. It helped increase CIO representation on community agency boards from 100 to 4,000.

In the postwar period, the committee has worked with public and private social service agencies, and with its own members to convince them that community services should be weighed on a self-respecting basis of need, not as a sort of Lady Bountiful hand-out to paupers.

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The American Red Cross and to a lesser extent the organizations which carry on highly emotional drives to combat cancer, heart disease and polio have inevitably come into conflict with the CIO conception of community help.

In case of a national emergency, the CIO believes the federal government should appropriate funds for basic help, leaving the Red Cross and other organizations to furnish supplementary assistance.

As for general fund-raising, CIO prefers federated drives, the community chest idea as opposed to separate campaigns for this and that highly desirable goal. Its community services contends there isn't enough private money going around to give full help, and therefore stresses the need for federal health research and a national health insurance program in addition to work on the community level.

Perhaps the best example of what the CIO is aiming at can be found in Michigan. There a State Health and Welfare Fund has been set up, with one joint campaign for funds, allocation of money on the basis of need, and full representation of labor on all the committees which make decisions affecting those who want help.

It may take a while, but CIO believes that in the long run its program will do more for more people than the old-fashioned silk-stocking, mink-coat approach to charity.