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LIFE ON THE RESERVATION

The reservation Indian is becoming less self-sufficient and more dependent upon what he calls "the Great White Father in Washington." Instead of freedom, the Indian has government-guaranteed "security." Instead of individual responsibility, he has a government bureau to handle his personal affairs. There are special laws governing his right to own land and to spend tribal money. Under that system of bondage it should surprise no one to find that many thousands of Indians have remained uneducated, hungry, diseased, and mismanaged.

FROM *Wards of The Government*

As a missionary to the Indians, I find your warnings underscored by my daily experience. One of the surest consequences of a government of "welfare" and "security" is the rapid decline and death of responsibility and character.

Whatever the pre-reservation Indian was, and his faults were real, he was able to take care of himself and had a character becoming to his culture and religion. He was a responsible person. Today he is far from that. The wretched security he has had, beginning with the food and clothing dole of early years, designed to enforce the reservation system and destroy Indian resistance, has sapped him of character. The average Indian knows that he can gamble and drink away his earnings and still be sure that his house and land will remain his own, and, with his hunting rights, he can always eke out some kind of existence.

Government men too often hamper and impede the man with initiative and character. This is because their program inevitably must be formulated in terms of the lowest common denominator, the weakest Indian. In addition, the provisions of the government for the "welfare" and "security" of the Indians remove the consequences from their sinning and irresponsibility. The result is a license to irresponsibility, which all the touted government projects cannot counteract.

And I believe the results would be no better for the best hundred or thousand persons selected from any society, after a generation or so of the same kind of "welfare" and "security" government.

There are many men in the Indian Service who are sincerely and earnestly trying to improve the Indian's welfare. They are, however, faced with this constant dilemma: All their zealous and patient efforts to help the Indian simply tend to become another crutch that the Indian depends on. Those Indians who have become progressive and independent apparently have done so because of personal and religious factors totally unrelated to the government program.

REVEREND R. J. RUSHDOONY
WESTERN SHOSHONE MISSION, OWYHEE, NEVADA
(IN A LETTER TO THIS FOUNDATION)

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