T-671
ETHEL WHEELER, WICHITA
INTERVIEWED BY: JULIA A. JORDAN
AND WILLIAM E. BITTLE
TRANSCRIBED BY: WILLIAM E. BITTLE
DATE OF INTERVIEW: 7-12-68

GENERAL SUBJECT: ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF INDIANS TODAY, WITH EMPHASIS ON LACK OF HELP BY BIA AND SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

PARTICULAR TOPICS DISCUSSED:

CRITICISM OF RECENT CHANGES BY BIA IN HANDLING LAND LEASES
DIFFICULTY WITH WELFARE REGULATIONS
FAMILY INCOME AND DIFFICULTIES WITH FINANCES
OTHER AGENCIES WHICH COULD PROVIDE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR INDIANS
HEALTH CARE FOR INDIANS
BORROWING MONEY AND INTEREST RATES
DECLINE OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPLOITATION OF INDIAN LABOR
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
TRIBAL COUNCIL

BACKGROUND OF INFORMANT:

Ethel Wheeler was born in 1900. She and her husband, Joseph, live on Ethel's allotment some five miles west of Fort Cobb and one and one-half miles north of the state highway 9. Both are relatively traditional in their outlook, and both are active participants in Wichita affairs. Ethel's brother, Louis Sadoka, is currently chairman of the Wichita Tribal Council. The house in which they live was built in the early twenties and is a typical rural Indian home, in poor repair, but neatly furnished and well-kept. Although there are several out-buildings close to the house, none but the latrine are in use. Ethel maintains a small garden (about an acre) south of the house, in which she grows corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, beans, and Indian pumpkins. Both are extremely affable and responsive and both are interested in talking with interviewers. They are not at all secretive about Wichita culture and affairs, and deal freely with almost any subject which is raised. Ethel's husband, Joe, is a diabetic and double amputee.

NOTE: This interview was made jointly by Julia A. Jordan and William E. Bittle for the purpose of sounding out grass roots Indian attitudes toward current conditions and problems in western Oklahoma Indian communities. This statement by Ethel Wheeler is perhaps one of the best commentaries on contemporary Indian attitudes and the attendant frustrations of dealing with the B.I.A. offices and other social agencies in the oral history collection. She essentially sums up the feelings of many Indian people living in the small towns and rural areas of western Oklahoma toward the red tape in dealing with the B.I.A., and well expresses the nature of the economic problems facing many Indians in this area, including those Indians in the older age brackets. Judging from similar kinds of testimony from other Indian people