

COLLETT'S "DOCKWEILER BILL"

At the Senate Committee's hearing on California Indian Affairs in San Francisco, July 2, Senators Wheeler and Thomas performed a vital service when they aired the purposes of the Dockweiler Bill which was so strenuously but unsuccessfully supported by F. G. Collett and his organization (Indians of California, Inc.) in the last session of Congress.

The bill was thinly disguised. Its enactment would have given Collett and his followers legal sanction to employ lawyers as "attorneys of record" in the prosecution of the California Indians' Court of Claims suit now pending, with an attending share of the award in the form of attorneys' expenses and fees.

The Jurisdictional Act of 1928 designated the Attorney General of California to prosecute the suit. At the hearing, Collett grossly charged Attorney General U. S. Webb with being dilatory, negligent and incompetent in handling the case. These baseless misrepresentations were justly condemned and refuted by Senator Wheeler.

Back of all this lies Collett's brazen plan to gain a legal foothold in this suit. Incessantly, he has disturbed and divided the Indians with distortions of fact. The Indians are told that the Attorney General is not suing for a sufficiently large award; that fabulous sums could be recovered by the right lawyers; that a "consent decree" is being hatched up; that the necessary accounting data could be gathered more quickly, if additional lawyers were employed, etc. Naturally, there is intense dissatisfaction among those Indians who not only believe these untruths, but who bolster their belief by supporting Collett and his organization with their miserably few dollars, running in the aggregate to six-figure sums annually.

We agree with Senator Wheeler's contention that the Indians should be represented by their own counsel, if they so wish, and that such counsel should be approved by the Attorney General. But we despair of its workability. How could 23,000 Indians scattered over the length and breadth of California—with here and there voluble, misguided cliques—come into agreement upon a limited number of attorneys? And granting this achievement, how much of the award would be eaten up in attorneys' fees and expenses? It was precisely to obviate these