

modern civilization. The Indian people, who had declined in numbers from about 800,000 at the time of Columbus to around 240,000 in the latter years of the past century, had turned the corner population-wise and were now increasing at least as fast as the general U. S. population and, in some tribal areas, considerably faster.

Yet the old living space was gone and the land available for Indian use was strictly limited in both acreage and productive capacity. Somewhere between a third and a fourth of the 400,000 or so tribal members who have special relations with the Federal Government had left their reservation homes and were living in non-Indian communities all over the country. The remainder were clustered either on or immediately adjacent to about 200 or more reservations and similar areas located largely in the arid or semi-arid regions of the western States.

It is, of course, this latter segment of the Indian population--- the people living on or near the reservations ---that is of primary, or at least major, concern both to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and to the National Fellowship of Indian Workers. By the late 1940's it seems to me any fair-minded person would admit that their situation was greatly improved over what it had been 50 or 60 years before. All of them were now recognized as citizens of the United States and had been since 1924. All of them had acquired the privilege of voting in every State on the same basis as other American citizens and increasing numbers of them were exercising this right in national, state and local elections. Also in increasing numbers their children were attending the regular public schools, rather than Federal Indian schools, and learning at an early age how to overcome their shyness, their sense of maladjustment in the presence of non-Indian people. Finally, and perhaps most important, some 25,000 Indian youngsters had taken part in World War II and had come out of military service with a far broader view of the possibilities of American life than they could possibly have acquired on the reservations.

All of these things were good. Yet they represented only one side of the Indian picture in the late 1940's. Along with these positive and progressive tendencies, there were many deep-rooted and long-standing problems.

In the field of health, for example, there was far too much sickness among reservation people and there were altogether too many of them living in squalor and almost total ignorance of even the most fundamental health precautions. While the Federal Government was doing a reasonably adequate job in maintaining Indian hospitals and in the curing of the sick, not nearly enough was being done along preventive medicine lines to strike at the root of the problem. So most of the hospitals were kept constantly filled and people seriously in need of hospitalization for tuberculosis or some similar ailment were often compelled to wait.

There was also the problem represented by Indian children who were growing up through their formative years without the opportunity of even an elementary education. By the late 1940's and early 1950's this particular problem was very largely confined, outside of Alaska, to one specific tribal group. But since this tribe, the Navajo, is by far the