

any Indian fortunate enough to have oil on his land and to become a man of affluence would desperately seek to support as many people as he could. They used to say, "everyone sponges off of Big Ben." And it was true, too, but this was just what he wanted. As Big Ben became a provider and he was proud to have every shirt tail relative and their kids living off of him. And the more there was of that the more self-esteem he had. Big Ben was looked up to as a chief by many Indians and he had achieved this standing by giving his support and protection to anyone around. This was the only means available to him for getting the kind of distinction he wanted.

But anyway, this old girl, the old maid, conceived the idea of not budgeting the Indian moneys and of giving them the opportunity of handling their affairs themselves. About the same time as all of this Big Ben had his oil production peter out. All that flow of money into his account ceased, but on the other hand, for the first time in his life he could get his hands on all his money, which was probably more money than he had ever seen in his life. Big Ben had the opportunity to be the big shot. I guess he ran through that 2002, 00 in about two years.

He claimed not to be able to speak English but he understood a lot more than he would admit. I've been with him lots of times when he would turn to the interpreter and say, "No, that's not right!" The last few months of his life he'd come to our office and pat his stomach and say, "Hungry, hungry." And I'd send him over to the Welfare Office. He could have lived very comfortably if not for the brain storm of a woman who knew nothing of Indian problems. He had lots of old Indians who died destitute.

Old Ben used to come to me whenever he had any serious legal problems. I've always considered that the most important role of the Indian Bureau is to protect the Indians from their own improvidence. In this case the Indian