

T-609

April 16, 1970

Index side B, recording time 10 min.; interview time one hour

Informant: Charles Vann, 32-year-old full blood Cherokee, Salina, Mayes County, Okla.

Subject: Some views and outlook as expressed by a young full blood Indian in to-day's world.

Charles Vann was born and raised in the Spring Creek country of Mayes County. He attended country schools at Iron Post, Balleu and Locust. He obtained his high school education at Salina. Charles wanted to be an artist and painter and attended the state college at Okmulgee.

His natural talent for drawing combined with a sincere interest in the history of Indians are assets in assisting him to be well on the way to becoming one of the promising young Indian artists. At this visit Charles was working on a painting of Gen. Stan Watie. Here he gives expression to portraying what he calls 'the breed of the Indian' and giving emphasis on Indian accomplishments. On another canvas he was doing an excellent mural-type painting expressing thoughts on that time when the Indian will be no more. In this painting Charles uses the brush to express his own personal feelings. In a part of the background are the towering skyline of buildings of the modern city. A light symbol represents the Great Spirit who seems to shine more and more on the Caucasian race. Out of the tall buildings is the eye of the U-pe-ga looking down on the Indian. The Indian proper is represented by a war-bonnetted skull atop a pole. A hand rises from the ground as if in a last plea of the Indians' cause. A glowing heart above the Indian symbol represents the love and remembrance of the Indians' long and hard existence by the Great Spirit. Another hand reaches out of the upper background to give the Indian knowledge and courage in a world not his own. Coming from the sappling post that holds the skull are two green leaves, signifying the possibility of prosperity for the Indian in the days yet to come. This will be a very beautiful and expressive work when completed, and will truly represent the composite of many feelings, hope for the future, and a remembrance of the past.

Speaking as a representative of to-day's working Indian in competition with other races of peoples in the job market, he says that the young Indians can prove themselves in any of the skills and professions. In his working experience he has found no trouble whatever in working with white people. Of great importance, he feels, is that the working Indian of to-day is still completely able to retain his individuality. He says that this factor in the past has been a fearful thought to many Indians, but now is rapidly being overcome. He says that at one time Indian children were forbidden to speak their native language in schools. Yet, to-day the children are encouraged to be bi-lingual. He voices a statement heard many times: "It is a sad thing about Indians marrying white people. The present civilization is drawing the Indian into complete extinction." He also says, "When that time comes I would not want to be living here."