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Rights Without Resources: The Rise and Fall of the Kansas Kickapoo

DONALD D. STULL, JERRY A. SCHULTZ and
KEN CADUE, SR.

INTRODUCTION

A new era in American Indian affairs was born on March 6, 1968, when President Lyndon Johnson, in a special message to Congress entitled "The Forgotten Americans," called for a new goal in federal Indian policy. He proposed "a policy of maximum choice for the American Indian: a policy expressed in programs of self-help, self-development, and self-determination."¹

Although the self-determination era was inaugurated by Johnson, Richard Nixon's special message on "The American Indians" of July 8, 1970 is generally viewed as the foundation of what was hailed at the time as a "radical new policy."² The message read in part:

It is long past time that the Indian policies of the Federal government began to recognize and build upon the capacities and insights of the Indian people. . . . The

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time has come to break decisively with the past and to create the conditions for a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions.³

Nixon went on to say that the previous policy of forced termination was wrong and that the goal of any new national Indian policy should be: "to strengthen the Indian's sense of autonomy without threatening his sense of community. . . . [Indians must be allowed to] become independent of Federal control without being cut off from Federal concern and Federal support."⁴ In concrete terms, Nixon recommended that Indian tribes have the right to assume administrative responsibility for service programs that had previously been administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); that Indian communities be allowed to control their own schools; and that increased federal funding be provided for economic development on reservations.

These special messages were enthusiastically welcomed by Indians and concerned non-Indians. They promised to provide a viable alternative to Indian reservations as "administered communities."⁵ The decade following Johnson's special message may well prove to have been the most active and important period in U.S. Indian policy. Major studies, such as the 1969 Kennedy Report on Indian Education and the report of the 1977 American Indian Policy Review Commission, exposed serious problems and issued recommendations for sweeping reforms. Indian activism brought the conditions and concerns of contemporary Indians to national attention. The fish-ins of the mid-1960s, the occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969, the Trail of Broken Treaties and the occupation of the BIA in 1972, the confrontation at Wounded Knee in 1973, and the Longest Walk in 1978 kept the "Indian problem" fresh in the minds of the American public and contributed to reforms in Indian policy. Court decisions reasserted tribal treaty rights and Indian-controlled schools and colleges began to emerge. In general, the period saw Indian people make significant strides in the area of health, education, professional training and employment, and energy development.

Major legislation during this period included the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, the Taos Blue Lake Restoration Act of 1970, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, the Indian Education Act of 1972, the Menominee Restoration Act of 1973, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act of 1976, the Indian Child

Welfare Act of 1978, and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978.

The centerpiece of the new era was the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. This act, known as Public Law 93-638 or merely 638, was the most important legislation affecting Indian tribes since the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Recognizing that "prolonged Federal domination . . . has served to retard rather than enhance the progress of Indian people and their communities . . . [in the] realization of self-government, and has denied to the Indian people an effective voice in the planning and implementation of programs for the benefit of Indians which are responsive to the true needs of Indian communities," the law seeks:

To provide maximum Indian participation in the Government and education of the Indian people; to provide for the full participation of Indian tribes in programs and services conducted by the Federal Government . . . ⁶

To insure maximum Indian self-determination, the secretaries of the Interior and Health, Education and Welfare were required to contract directly with any tribe requesting programs and services previously provided by the federal government. This act promised a profound shift in the conduct of Indian affairs—federal programs were to be planned and administered by the tribes themselves. The paternalism of the executive agencies that stood between Congress and tribal governments could now be dispensed with.⁷

While the emergence of the Indian self-determination policy promised a bright new beginning for Indian people, the advantages to Indians during this new era have proved more apparent than real. The policy's focal enabling legislation, PL 93-638, is fraught with paradoxical elements. It ostensibly creates a new legal vehicle that Indian tribes can use to control their own affairs, but it does so within a framework that impedes the achievement of this goal, since it fails to establish concrete mechanisms of implementation.⁸

The Self-Determination Act was supposed to transfer local decision-making power to the tribes, but because it failed to restructure the BIA or alter its basic relationship to the tribes the net effect has been to increase tribal dependency on the Bureau.

A decade under PL 93-638 has brought a weakening of the position of the agency superintendents, a strengthening of the position of the area offices through the provision of technical assistance to the tribes in implementing 638 contracts, and the emergence of an unwieldy contracting process. Most tribal governments remain quite limited in their ability to administer and carry out a full range of service programs.⁹ Consequently, some have suggested that the name of PL 93-638 be changed to the "BIA Self-Perpetuation Act."¹⁰

As a host of new federal programs took hold in Indian country in the 1970s, reservation bureaucracies emerged based on jobs provided by these programs. By 1980, government programs provided employment for one out of three reservation Indians.¹¹ The increased spending that accompanied the policy of self-determination saw major increases in the budgets of the Indian Health Service (IHS) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs—at least some of these increments were passed along to the tribes. But the levels of funding were never adequate, and the strides of the early 1970s were quickly erased by the budget cuts of the early 1980s.

A small but select literature on recent Indian policy has begun to appear. Notably absent, however, are treatments of implementation at the local level. The Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas provides an excellent case study of the successes and failures attending the recent emergence of Indian self-determination.

THE KANSAS KICKAPOO

The Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas is a federally recognized tribe centered on and around a 6×5 mile reservation in the northeast corner of the state. With a reservation population of slightly more than 600, the Kansas Kickapoo are in many ways typical of tribal enclaves. They are young, with a median age of 20.5 years, and characterized by poverty, endemic unemployment, low educational attainment, and major health and social problems. Life expectancy is less than 50 years.

The reservation is also fairly typical. Located in rural northeast Kansas, it is 40 miles from the nearest city (Topeka). A classic case of "checkerboarding," only 37 percent of the 19,200-acre reservation is under Indian ownership. These 7,160 acres are divided fairly evenly between communal tribal land and allotments

owned by individual Indians. The major natural resources available to the tribe are the land itself and the water of the Delaware River which bisects the reservation. There are no significant mineral resources in the area.¹²

THE RISE OF THE KANSAS KICKAPOO

At the dawn of the self-determination era in 1968, the Kickapoo tribal council was a government in name only. By the 1950s, most tribal members had migrated to surrounding cities and towns to find work. The remaining population consisted largely of aging traditionalists and their dependents (often grandchildren whose parents were working in the cities). Most lived in dilapidated housing which had been built during the 1930s. They earned their livelihood by leasing their allotments to non-Indian farmers, trapping and gardening, and seasonal farm labor. Those with steady jobs either commuted to surrounding non-Indian communities or worked at the BIA agency office in Horton, six miles east of the reservation. The few federal programs that were available were administered by the agency superintendent.

Tribal development began in 1972 when a tribal office was established in the nearby agency town. The staff consisted of one full-time employee, an accountant, and the tribal chairman, who was employed on a half-time basis. From this modest beginning the tribe set out to, as they liked to put it, "hunt the federal buffalo."

In 1972 the tribal budget was approximately \$30,000 and came from a BIA contract. In 1974, the tribal office moved to a temporary trailer on the reservation as the budget and scope of operations began to expand. The ultimate goal of the tribal government was to build an autonomous reservation community. They hoped to develop the infrastructure, social services, and employment opportunities necessary for independence from the surrounding non-Indian community.

The next few years brought an astounding surge in infrastructural development. Between 1976 and 1981, grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the Department of Commerce enabled the tribe to construct a gymnasium-multipurpose center; a library-cultural heritage center; a shopping center containing a gas station, laundromat, cafe, and small

grocery store; a senior citizens' center; a day-care center; 25 homes for the elderly; and 50 single-family homes.

A grant from EDA funded a water treatment and distribution system for the reservation. State and tribal funds were used to develop a new powwow grounds and construct an outdoor recreational area and swimming pool. A Department of Labor grant established a tribal print shop. The Indian Action Team formed the basis for the Kickapoo Construction Company which capitalized on the reservation building boom.

In conjunction with this burst of developmental activity, the Kickapoo sought to regain tribal control of lands within the reservation boundaries. They repurchased more than 2,400 acres and established a farm and ranch with a loan from the BIA.

Perhaps the most impressive manifestation of the Kickapoo's meteoric rise occurred in 1981. Following the closing of the public school that served the reservation, the Kickapoo mounted an impressive campaign to obtain it. In spite of many obstacles placed in their way by the local, state, and federal governments, they established their own Indian contract school, serving grades K-12.

During this period the Kickapoo Tribe used a broad array of federally funded programs to begin to address an equally broad range of needs. The federal government offered a grab bag of funding opportunities from which the tribe could, to a degree at least, pick and choose. The tribe was quick to take advantage of as many programs as possible, and this strategy proved highly successful. At the height of this period, the tribe was said to have one of the highest per capita incomes from federal funding sources of any Indian tribe. Between 1977 and 1985 the tribe obtained funding from over 40 program sources. This range of programs can be lumped into five broad areas.

Tribal Government and Administration drew its funding primarily from ongoing program funds provided by the BIA as well as from indirect monies from other programs. Planning monies came largely from HEW's (later HHS) Office of Native American Programs (later the Administration for Native Americans [ANA]). In addition to supporting a growing tribal bureaucracy, administrative funds were used to commission long-range development plans covering the areas of land use, industrial development, water rights, health, education, and water resource development. Five of the six plans were produced by outside consulting firms,

all at considerable cost to the tribe. Such plans were a necessary investment, however, to legitimate the tribe's quest for federal aid.

Social and Health Services contracted and/or administered directly by the tribe included Preventive Health Services, Community Health Representatives, Health Management, Emergency Medical Services, Social and Nutritional Services for the Elderly, USDA Food Distribution, the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, and Dental Services.

Housing, Infrastructural Development, and Maintenance provided the bulk of tribal income prior to 1981. In addition to the construction of housing and tribal buildings, programs in this area provided funding for road construction and maintenance, building maintenance, and security. A tribal housing authority functioned semi-autonomously from the tribal council.

With the founding of the Kickapoo Nation School in 1981, *Education* became an increasingly important source of funds and employment. Although tied politically to the tribal council, the Board of Education is elected independently and is not subject to council authority.

Education has long been of great concern to the Kickapoo; however, until the acquisition of the school, educational programs such as Johnson-O'Malley and adult education were administered by the BIA. With the acquisition of an Indian contract school, new sources of funds became available. Most funding comes from the BIA, which provides funds on a weighted per capita basis and ongoing support for the administration, operation, and maintenance of the school. Funds obtained on a competitive basis have included a Title IV grant for the development of tribal studies materials. Although it has been a rocky road, the school has become a fully functioning educational institution and a major employer on the reservation. It was accredited in 1985.

The final area of program funding was *Economic Development*. Within this general category were three major sources of funds. The Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) was a major source of job training and employment. Until it was phased out in 1982, it provided numerous jobs in the administrative offices and tribal programs, such as the print shop, shopping center, and water treatment plant. It was replaced in 1984 with the Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA).

The most important source of training and employment was

the Indian Action Team (IAT). Intended to be the foundation for a tribal construction company, it provided the single largest source of employment on the reservation and the labor force necessary for infrastructural development and maintenance.

The most successful of the tribe's economic development projects was the farm and ranch. Land was acquired through funds from Indian Claims Commission settlements, and start-up funds were provided by a loan from the BIA. Income from the farm was used to augment other tribal programs.

During the 1970s the Kansas Kickapoo became a model of successful adaptation to the new policy of self-determination. Between 1972 and 1980, tribal employment rose from 2 persons to 142; the annual budget rose from \$30,000 to \$1.7 million. Through the skillful acquisition of public sector funds, the Kickapoo seemed to be well on their way to achieving their goal of tribal self-determination.

THE FALL OF THE KANSAS KICKAPOO

The Kickapoo's success proved to be a mixed blessing. Although federal programs provided rapid infrastructural development and jobs for a growing number of tribal members, they also produced an increasing dependency on "The Great White Father" in Washington.

The Kickapoo's dream began to unravel in the fall of 1981. Moderate reductions in Indian program support had begun to occur in FY1981; however, with the Reagan administration's first budget in FY1982 extensive cuts led to a serious loss of programs, services, jobs, and planning money. A brief example will illustrate the impact of the budget reductions. Prior to the budget cuts the Indian Action Team was funded at more than \$480,000 per year, employed 34 people who supported 113 dependents, and provided upkeep for the tribe's public facilities. It was discontinued in 1981!

The loss of the IAT and other cuts produced severe repercussions in every aspect of reservation life. In August 1980 there were 142 Indians employed on the reservation; an additional 74 were seeking work. The unemployment rate at this time, 34 percent, was the lowest in recent memory. By October 1981 the number of persons employed on the reservation fell to 91; the fol-

lowing January only 16 people were working. In 18 months the unemployment rate catapulted from 34 percent to 93 percent! Subsequently, the number of tribal employees increased to between 30 and 50 persons, but about 70 percent of the reservation labor force remained out of work.¹³

Table 1 presents the overall tribal budget for FY1981–FY1984. The dollar amounts and their percent of the total are presented for each budgetary category. The FY1981 budget reflects tribal funding during the last of the "golden years." Even then, overall program support had begun to wane. The magnitude of the Reagan cuts is seen in FY1982 when the tribe's budget fell by 32 percent. It is worth noting that the BIA's operating budget declined by only 4.5 percent in FY1982.¹⁴

The budgets for FY1983 and FY1984 suggest that the Kickapoo quickly recovered from the devastating recisions suffered during Reagan's first year in office. These figures are misleading, however, since they are estimates—the tribe actually received considerably less support.

Table 2 gives an even clearer picture of the tribe's financial losses by excluding the education category, which consists of the budget for the Kickapoo Nation School. Although the school employs some Kickapoos, most of the staff are not tribal members. The school's budget is administered by an elected board of education, and the tribal council does not control the funds.

Looking once again at Table 1 we see that the school began operations late in FY1981—in that year it contributed 7.8 percent of all funds received by the Kickapoo. In subsequent years its budget increased considerably while the tribe's budget declined sharply. Since FY1982 the Kickapoo Nation School has accounted for approximately half of all federal monies coming to the Kickapoo.

If we exclude the school's budget, which is not under direct tribal control, the budget of the Kickapoo Tribe was cut by almost two-thirds in FY1982. Although some recovery took place in FY1983 and FY1984, the tribe was forced to operate on annual budgets that were more than one-third below their FY1981 level.

Cuts in the FY1982 budget, drastic as they were, were only part of the reason for the fall of the Kansas Kickapoo. A running battle over the budget emerged between the president and Congress, which led to repeated delays in final passage. The 1982 Interior Appropriations Bill was not signed until December 23, almost

Table 1
Kickapoo Tribal Budget by Category,
FY 1981-FY1984

	Tribal Government and Administration		Social Services and Health		Housing and Infrastructure Maintenance		Economic Development		Education		Total
FY 81	\$406,577	23.7%	\$210,911	12.3%	\$304,642	17.7%	\$661,246	38.5%	\$134,575	7.8%	\$1,717,951
FY 82	\$214,094	18.3%	\$194,290	16.6%	\$ 38,750	3.3%	\$131,772	11.3%	\$589,928	50.5%	\$1,168,834
FY 83*	\$364,337	20.0%	\$181,755	10.0%	\$307,300	16.9%	\$119,825	6.6%	\$847,027	46.7%	\$1,820,244
FY 84#	\$445,667	25.8%	\$167,224	9.7%	\$187,000	10.8%	\$121,124	7.0%	\$806,226	46.7%	\$1,727,241

*Estimated figures. Actual monies received were probably less.

#Estimated figures. FY 1984 was a year of political turmoil, making estimates very difficult. Some funding was not released to the tribe.

Table 2
Kickapoo Tribal Budget by Category, Excluding Education,
FY 1981-FY1984

	Tribal Government and Administration		Social Services and Health		Housing and Infrastructure Maintenance		Economic Development		Total
FY 81	\$406,577	25.6%	\$210,911	13.3%	\$304,642	19.2%	\$661,246	41.8%	\$1,583,376
FY 82	\$214,094	37.0%	\$194,290	33.6%	\$ 38,750	6.7%	\$131,772	22.8%	\$ 578,906
FY 83*	\$364,337	37.4%	\$181,755	18.7%	\$307,300	31.6%	\$119,825	12.3%	\$ 973,217
FY 84#	\$445,667	48.3%	\$167,224	18.2%	\$187,000	20.3%	\$121,124	13.2%	\$ 921,015

*Estimated figures. Actual monies received were probably less.

#Estimated figures. FY 1984 was a year of political turmoil, making estimates very difficult. Some funding was not released to the tribe.

three months into the fiscal year.¹⁵ Funding uncertainties plagued the BIA and other federal agencies as they operated on continuing resolutions. The delays and uncertainties were compounded at the tribal level, since tribal proposals could not be processed until agency budgets were approved.

A severe winter storm struck the reservation in January 1982, exacerbating the problems caused by budget cuts and delays. Over 90 percent of its members were out of work, and the tribe's pending contracts had yet to be approved. The BIA agency office promised to investigate the situation, but refused to allocate emergency funds. National news coverage brought an outpouring of private aid, and a major crisis was narrowly averted. Spring brought relief from the bitter cold and approval of pending contracts, but reductions in funding forced the closing of the gymnasium, library, and shopping center.

Following the disastrous winter of 1982, the tribe appeared to be getting back on its feet. The budget for FY1983 was almost double that of the previous year. The school was in full operation, with an enrollment of more than 100 students and a number of tribal employees. But the apparent comeback was illusory.

In the spring of 1983 a recall campaign was mounted against five of the seven members of the tribal council. They were accused of illegally passing tribal resolutions, improperly disposing of government property, and misappropriating tribal funds. When the tribal council rejected the recall petition, the "dissident group" elected its own council and took over the tribal office.

In the absence of a tribal court system, the "old council" obtained a restraining order and the matter went to Federal District Court. Citing the 1978 Supreme Court decision of *Santa Clara v. Martinez*, the District Court ruled that it had no jurisdiction. The BIA agency superintendent refused to intercede, because of a directive that Indian tribes should settle their own internal disputes, and continued to recognize the "old council."¹⁶

The "old council" may have won the battle, but it eventually lost the war. Soon both Kickapoos and local non-Indians were calling for an investigation. Pressure from the U.S. Attorney General's office and the congressional delegation led to a freeze on some new program funds and audits of existing programs.

Meanwhile the Kickapoo Nation School was also becoming embroiled in the tribal dispute. In April 1983 the tribal council dissolved the elected school board and appointed a new one. The previous board had been controlled by the faction opposing the

council and had steadfastly resisted the council's attempts to obtain access to the school's budget. The actions of the tribal council resulted in a large drop in enrollment at the school. Throughout the fall of 1983 friction between the school board and a newly appointed superintendent mounted. When he was fired, a teacher walkout combined with pressure from tribal members, congressional delegates, and the BIA to force the tribal council to dissolve the appointed school board and hold a special school board election. Officials from the BIA insisted that the chairman leave the operation of the school to the newly elected board.¹⁷

At the semi annual tribal meeting in January 1984, the tribal chairman was voted out of office. However, his ouster, and the refusal of the agency superintendent to recognize the later recall of the treasurer of the tribal council, left the council split and impotent. The holdover members of the "old council" boycotted subsequent meetings, leaving the council without a quorum and unable to pass necessary resolutions. The result was a tribe without a functioning government.

Once again the BIA refused to honor the wishes of the Kickapoo people and step in to resolve the matter. It was not resolved until the following October when the remnants of the "old council" were voted out of office in the tribe's annual election. With this election a unified tribal council emerged. By then, however, the tribe had been without effective leadership for nine months. During this time many program funds were held up and several new projects were lost.

The tribe had been successful in purging itself of what many believed was a corrupt government. It had done so through a concerted effort by the majority of tribal members. Although they worked largely behind the scenes, tribal elders and religious leaders had been a driving force in the recall effort. They had succeeded in spite of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the federal agency with trust responsibility for the tribe. Their victory was a costly one, however. The tribe was saddled with a large debt, the legacy of the previous council. The new council was without means to repay it, since their income was derived almost entirely from federal program monies. The reputation of the previous council made federal agencies and private contractors reluctant to provide additional monies or services to the tribe.

At present, little remains of the glory days of the Kansas Kickapoo. Income from federal programs is drastically reduced. The only source of private-sector income is the farm and ranch. This

income, formerly a source of discretionary spending, must now be used to pay off their BIA loan. Tribal buildings are abandoned or underutilized, and many homes have fallen into disrepair. The school remains the Kickapoo's most successful endeavor, yet its existence is precarious. Inadequate and uncertain funding, low enrollments, and administrative turnover make its future uncertain.

DISCUSSION

In retrospect, certain factors can be identified as contributing to the rapid rise and fall of the Kansas Kickapoo. Their rise was undoubtedly precipitated by a marked increase in the availability of federal dollars. For a time, at least, it became relatively easy to "hunt the federal buffalo." The influx of federal funds lured many people to the reservation, among them a core of young men and women eager to assume leadership in the development of the reservation economy.

The increase in funding opportunities is not sufficient to explain the rapid rise of the Kansas Kickapoo, however. Three factors seem to have been especially important in the Kickapoo's success: 1) tribal leaders recognized their own limitations in grantsmanship and hired skilled and dedicated non-Indians to serve as planners and mid-level tribal managers. Although non-Indian planners rarely lasted more than a year or two, the tribe maintained continuity in its planning staff by drawing on the resources of the nearby University of Kansas;¹⁸ 2) the tribe generally worked around, rather than through, the local agency office. They adopted a militant, no-nonsense stance toward the BIA and other federal agencies. Instead of going through "proper" channels, they usually flew directly to Washington to pull off deals for tribal projects. They also became adept at using their congressional delegation to influence funding agents;¹⁹ and 3) the Kickapoo put together a tribal council and administration that remained in power for a decade. This continuity in tribal leadership is rare, and it enabled them to develop and implement a number of long-range projects.

It is easy to blame the Kickapoo's fall on Reaganomics, and the severity, rapidity, and irregularity of the cuts in their budget were important. But they do not tell the whole story.

The very nature of the policy of self-determination led the Kickapoos to become increasingly dependent on the federal government. The Kickapoos had little real choice in setting long-range tribal goals since federal agencies established funding categories and priorities. Tribes could only compete for a piece of the pie that had already been sliced in Washington and the area offices of the BIA. They built a library, not so much because it fit into *their* long-range goals, but because the federal government made the funds available—it was a way to get another building and provide jobs for tribal members in the process. The Kickapoo built their adaptive strategy around the continued acquisition of monies for infrastructural development. Both the tribe and the federal government suffered from what has been called the “edifice complex”—little serious thought was given to developing an economy that would sustain the buildings.

The tribal council cannot really be faulted in its strategy. As long as they could successfully compete for program monies, there was no reason to seriously pursue less lucrative but more stable sources of support. They did attempt to set up an industrial park but were unable to attract investors. Governmental constraints and tribal politics, the remoteness of the reservation, the lack of a skilled labor force, and the absence of an adequate infrastructure (poor roads, limited water lines, etc.), offset any incentives the tribe could offer. Resistance to economic development also came from conservative elements within the tribe: many saw rapid development as being in conflict with traditional values and goals; others feared termination if the tribe became too independent. Schusky (1979) has noted similar problems on the Dakota reservations.²⁰

As government programs began to create jobs and housing, tribal members returned to the reservation. Many of the new immigrants had lived most of their lives in cities and had little real identification with the reservation homeland. The programs were not seen as a means to an end, but merely as sources of jobs. The tribal council saw jobs as political capital to be dispensed to relatives and supporters. Poor management and job performance were often the result.

During the boom years money flowed and federal agencies were lax in their accounting requirements. Program monies were often redirected to pay for questionable activities. As tribal income increased so did the power of the tribal administration; the

result was increasing arrogance and corruption on the part of some tribal leaders.

The result was inevitable. Eventually the pendulum of federal spending began to swing the other way, and as always, Indians were among the first to be squeezed when the government tightened its budgetary belt. When cutbacks overtook the tribe, the factors that had contributed to their success became liabilities. The non-Indian planners were among the first employees to go when funds began to dwindle—some saw the handwriting on the wall and moved on; others stood with the tribe but became constantly embroiled in the emerging political turmoil that accompanied budget decisions. In spite of attempts to remain neutral, they could not help but be identified with various political factions. Even when friendly factions rose to power, their political credibility was short-lived because they possessed jobs or commanded resources in short supply. The power brokers wanted control of all available resources in order to distribute them to political supporters within the tribe. As these jobs and resources were used to satisfy short-term needs, the tribe's long-term adaptive capabilities were lost.²¹

During its rise the tribal council had successfully circumvented the BIA's chain of command; in the process they made enemies. When tribal fortunes began to reverse, Bureau personnel rarely went out of their way to work with the tribe. The stability of the tribal council and administration also played a major role in the downfall. As the council became more powerful and entrenched, it became increasingly alienated from the people—especially the tribal elders and religious leaders. Without their support—the ultimate authority among the Kickapoo—the tribal council could not maintain its power.

The rise and fall of the Kansas Kickapoo is instructive to all who are concerned with the welfare of Indian people. The Indian Self-Determination Act and related legislation provided a laudable goal for federal Indian policy, but, unfortunately, these acts failed to provide the mechanisms necessary for the achievement of that goal. The Kansas Kickapoo enthusiastically embraced the rhetoric of Indian self-determination. They sincerely believed that they could use this legislation and the related federal programs to build an independent community within which the tribe and its members could "determine their own destiny."

Although the events of recent years have shattered their dream, the Kickapoo have much to show for their effort. From

meager beginnings, they have built a reservation infrastructure and acquired a tribal land base. They have developed a functioning government that administers a variety of services. The Kickapoo people have become increasingly involved in their government, and with that involvement has come greater awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. The most important development of the last decade has been the acquisition of their own school. Tribal control over the education of the youth is vitally important if the Kickapoo are to make further strides toward their goal of self-determination.

In the 1970s the Kansas Kickapoo tasted the fruits of successful development, but there was never enough money or enough time to develop a diversified and self-sustaining economy. What was needed was an extended period of federal commitment to Indian self-determination—commitment to adequate funding, technical assistance, and innovative programs designed to achieve independence from the continued domination of reservation economies by federal programs and bureaucracies.

The case of the Kansas Kickapoo forcefully demonstrates the need for systematic and timely analyses of policy implementation. The Indian Self-Determination Act has now been in place for more than a decade, yet little attention has been paid to its consequences for the very governments and communities it is designed to aid.²² Although a number of overviews of past and present Indian policy have appeared in recent years,²³ studies of the impact of national Indian policy at the tribal level remain rare.²⁴ Policy analysts have been particularly remiss in their failure to analyze the outcomes of the implementation of the major enactments of the self-determination era.

Case studies, such as the present one, are needed to identify and expose the flaws and inconsistencies in federal Indian policy. The official goal of the current policy of Indian self-determination is indeed laudable. The reality of its implementation, however, has been the creation of even greater federal domination and tribal dependency. Rhetoric is not enough. The responsibility of the federal government to assist Indian tribes to regain self-determination can only be fulfilled through a long-term commitment to work *with* tribal governments to generate and implement policies and programs that are compatible with local needs and capacities.

The "top-down" approach to policy formulation has certainly been a major factor in the creation of the present contradictory

policy that preaches self-determination but encourages increased dependency. If Indian people are ever to achieve their goal, and supposedly the federal government's as well, of economic and political self-determination, policy formulation must come from the *bottom up*.²⁵

Throughout our history, the federal government has consistently sought a solution to the "Indian problem." What have appeared to be erratic shifts in policy, in reality have been strategic adjustments. The ultimate, though in recent years unstated, goal has remained the same—the political, economic, and cultural assimilation of Indian tribes and people. The present policy of Indian self-determination, as it has been implemented thus far, continues this ignominious tradition. Yet self-determination legislation of the 1970s contains the seeds of a truly "radical new policy." In the decades ahead the federal government must work in concert with Indian tribes to nurture those seeds if self-determination for Indian people is ever to be achieved. Only when Indian tribes have attained true political and economic self-determination will the "Indian problem" be solved.

NOTES

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2. G. P. Castile, "Federal Indian Policy and the Sustained Enclave: An Anthropological Perspective," *Human Organization* 33 (1974): 220.

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