

Eleanor Roosevelt and the American Indian: The Iroquois as a Case Study

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Historians have long recognized Eleanor Roosevelt's great contributions to the evolution and direction of modern liberalism, especially the civil rights movement in the United States.¹ Despite this extensive literature, no scholar has specifically focused on her work on behalf of American Indians. To be sure, Roosevelt's views on American Indians and their betterment were not static, but evolved dramatically over three decades. As First Lady and as American representative in the immediate postwar era at the United Nations, she viewed American Indians largely in maternalistic fashion, as dependent peoples in need of a variety of federal government programs, health, education, and job training, which would aid them in achieving full American citizenship with all of the protections that followed. As late as August 25, 1950, Roosevelt's assimilationist attitudes about American Indians and their future were revealed in a column in "My Day":²

Had we done a really good job it seems to me that our Indians today would be educated; there would be no need of reservations; they would be fully capable of taking their places as citizens, and the tribes would have full compensation for lands they owned. Our inability to work out this small problem satisfactorily and fairly is one of the real blots on our history.

Roosevelt saw a larger meaning to this failure: "We don't seem to be able to deal with dependent people, and that is why I have always been anxious to see us admit Alaska and Hawaii as states."³

Eleanor Roosevelt clearly shifted away from this assimilationist view in the last years of her extraordinary life. As a result of the breaking of federal treaties by state "takes" of Indian lands, especially in New York State and Pennsylvania, she began to equate American mistreatment of the Indians with Soviet abuses of down-trodden nationalities and "captive nations" behind the Iron Curtain. Thus, increasingly in her column "My Day," Roosevelt became an outspoken advocate of

Indian treaty rights. By focusing on her long-term relationship with the Iroquois Indians in New York State, one can clearly see the changing nature of her views about American Indians and American Indian policies.

In her pre-White House years, Eleanor Roosevelt had only a passing interest in and limited acquaintance with American Indians. Her uncle Theodore Roosevelt, himself a rancher in the Dakotas in the 1880s and historian of the frontier, often spoke of his “cowboy life” in the “Wild West.”⁴ Her husband Franklin, a local historian of Dutchess County, New York, had frequently pointed out that the western fields of his Hyde Park estate had been cleared by the Indians prior to his family’s settlement in 1649.⁵ Eleanor Roosevelt’s first direct contact with American Indians came on her visits to Campobello Island, New Brunswick, the location of the summer cottage of her husband’s family since the early 1880s. In order to get to the island before the building of a bridge at Lubec, Maine, the Roosevelts had to secure ferry service from Eastport, Maine, opposite the island. Many of the day laborers in the region were from the nearby Passamaquoddy Indian Reservation, two miles away, who served as ferrymen for the Roosevelts. Indeed, in the cottage today are beautiful turn-of-the-century sweet grass baskets made by some of the Indian families on the reservation.⁶ Although her husband rarely visited Campobello after contracting polio there in 1921, Eleanor continued to use the 34-room cottage for rest from her hectic schedule right to the time of her death in 1962.⁷

Eleanor Roosevelt’s real involvement in Indian affairs began with the election of her husband to the Presidency in 1932. As First Lady she was constantly bombarded with requests for assistance by America’s forgotten people, including numerous American Indians. Although she became involved in a variety of New Deal projects, Roosevelt’s greatest thrust in the 1930s was with the Iroquois, namely the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora Indians. Her involvement was largely as a result of specific lobbying efforts by two New Yorkers: Louis R. Bruce, Jr. and Nameé Henricks.⁸ Much of her early interest, as was true in other areas, was on youth programs and on education that would sustain and promote Indian self-sufficiency.

Louis R. Bruce, Jr., later to be Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1969 to 1972, was one of Eleanor Roosevelt’s closest confidantes on Indian affairs from the 1930s onward. A Mohawk-Lakota Indian and son of the Methodist minister at the Onondaga Indian Reservation, Bruce, after having graduated from Syracuse University, found himself in the early years of the Great Depression working as a salesman for Rogers Peet Clothiers on Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street in New York City. One of his clients was the First Lady, who purchased President Roosevelt’s

clothes there. Upon one of her shopping trips to the store, Bruce was invited to the White House to discuss his ideas with President Roosevelt and Aubrey Williams, the head of the National Youth Administration (NYA). He was soon appointed to head the NYA for Indians in New York State, beginning in March 1936. As an Iroquois, born on the Onondaga Reservation in 1906 and educated at nearby Syracuse University, he was quite familiar with the people and their problems and became a strong advocate of securing better services for Iroquois youth, appealing to government officials throughout the mid- and late 1930s.⁹

Bruce's success was largely based on his ability to deal effectively with the Iroquois themselves. Advisory committees, composed of tribal leaders, screened and selected Indians for the program based upon ability and character. Quite significantly, the most prominent community leaders were well represented in the programs both as formally hired instructors or as informal resource persons. Both Chiefs Andrew Gibson and George Thomas, two Onondagas who were Confederacy officials, contributed their expertise. Chief Thomas' son, E. Lee, served as an Indian camp counselor and illustrated the NYA's *The Indian Counselor's Handbook of Legends and Information on the Iroquois* while Beatrice Smith, Chief Gibson's granddaughter, also served in the program.¹⁰ The NYA Indian program in New York State was largely administered out of a community building constructed by Indian youth workers in the center of the Onondaga Indian Reservation. By 1939, the NYA Indian program designed 27-week work projects and employed 248 Iroquois youngsters. Every Iroquois reservation in the state was affected by the size and scope of the undertaking.¹¹

Bruce's success was also based on his ability to build on earlier successful programs. The NYA's most heralded experiment, teaching Iroquois youth job skills to prepare them for employment as camp counselors, is a case in point. The idea for this program was first developed by Ray Fadden at the St. Regis Reservation. Without federal support, Fadden, a science teacher who had previously taught at the reservation school at Tuscarora, had organized the Akwesasne Mohawk Counselor Organization in the mid-1930s. The aim of the organization was to encourage Mohawk youth to participate in outdoor recreation, learn wilderness survival skills, teach Indian lore as well as arts and crafts, and most importantly, to inculcate an overall appreciation of their Indian heritage. The success of the program became evident when the boys began to be hired as camp counselors.

The greatest legacy of the New Deal's effect on the Iroquois in New York was the construction of the Tonawanda Indian Community House. To this day, this two-story building in the shape of a huge longhouse, which is adjacent to the Tonawanda Indian Reservation boundary near Akron, New York, is still a focal

point of Indian life in western New York. The Indian center houses an auditorium, club rooms, classrooms for adult and juvenile education, a gymnasium, library, museum, and public showers. It is administered by the New York State Department of Social Services and by an all-Indian board of directors. Before its construction, the Tonawanda Seneca Indians had used a former chicken coop for a library, had an unheated frame building for a meeting place, and had used an unlighted barn as a community workshop.¹²

Eleanor Roosevelt's involvement in sponsoring the project stemmed entirely from the persistence of one woman: Nameé Henricks. The wife of a minister from Penn Yan, New York, and an active proponent of the Democrat Party, Henricks was a tireless advocate of providing an Indian center for the betterment of the local Tonawanda Senecas. As an individual active in numerous women's organizations as well as the Daughters of the American Revolution, Henricks used her longtime contacts to serve the needs of the Senecas. From the mid-1930s onward, she pressured state and federal officials for talking books for blind Indians, work-relief projects, road repairs, wells, and emergency food supplies during blizzards. Working with the local library association and Arthur C. Parker, the famous anthropologist of Seneca ancestry and director of the Rochester Public Museum, she began promoting the idea of a community center in early 1935. Parker and Henricks, working with a Tonawanda reservation committee headed by Elsiná Doctor, May Spring, and Wyman Jemison, held meetings on the project that generated further community support.¹³

In order to get Roosevelt's support for the project, Henricks agreed with the First Lady's demand that the construction of the building be done exclusively by the Tonawanda Senecas, in order for them to gain job experience in masonry and carpentry skills for future employment. Later, Roosevelt invited Henricks to the White House to explain the needs of the Senecas, inquired about the feasibility of government sponsorship, endorsed the project to federal and state officials, provided Henricks with letters of introduction to key politicians, overcame bureaucratic tape at every turn, and used her position as First Lady to politically strong-arm acceptance of the work relief proposal from reluctant administrators. She tracked the project from the initial concept to the budgetary release of the necessary funds from the Treasury Department. As a result of her aid in the project, she was made an honorary member of the Tonawanda Indian Reservation Community Building Association in September, 1936. Although she missed the groundbreaking ceremonies in the fall of 1936, Roosevelt was a featured guest at the opening of the building the next year.¹⁴

Roosevelt's concern for the Iroquois' well-being continued well into the war years. During World War II, sovereignty-minded, Iroquois Indians questioned

whether the United States could conscript them into military service under the Selective Service Act of 1940. In response, Roosevelt advised them that the act applied to them and cautioned them about it, arranging for some to escape prosecution if they agreed to volunteer for military service.¹⁵ In addition, when the Senecas were threatened with retaliation—the suspension of school bus transportation for their children—for lawfully canceling unpaid leases for property in Salamanca, New York, they wrote Mrs. Roosevelt, who reported the threat to officials in the Interior Department.¹⁶

Yet, Roosevelt continued to promote full Indian integration into the American polity in the early postwar period. She supported attorney Felix Cohen and the American Civil Liberties Union's lobbying and legal efforts to guarantee Indian voting rights—the court case *Harrison v. Laveen* (1948)—and extend Social Security benefits to the Indians. As an assimilationist, she encouraged equality and equal treatment for the Indians without recognizing Indian nations' special unique status in American law.¹⁷ When Congress attempted and carried through the transfer of criminal and civil jurisdiction from the federal government to New York State in 1948 and 1950, Iroquois Indians wrote Roosevelt, who, by this time, was largely focused on issues of world peace and cold war tensions at the United Nations. Significantly, Roosevelt did not take a stand against the transfer to state jurisdiction, suggesting she was not opposed to the move.¹⁸

Despite her reluctance to support the Iroquois position on the transfer of civil and criminal jurisdiction, Roosevelt's views about governmental Indian policies, at both the federal and state levels, began to shift by the early 1950s. In her White House years, she saw government, both federal and state, as agents of positive change capable of bringing betterment to the masses. In her Progressive-New Deal framework, government had a responsibility to be activist in its approach to social problems. To Roosevelt, when government failed its citizens, including Indians, it was because officials were misinformed, not because of evil intentions or because of self-interest.

With the appointment of Dillon S. Myer as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1950 and the federal push for "termination," she increasingly became a sharp critic of governmental officials and Indian policies.¹⁹ Although policy makers used varied terms to describe postwar Indian policy, including "emancipation," "federal withdrawal," or "readjustment," the most frequently employed, and perhaps the most descriptive word to characterize the shift, was "termination." In actuality, termination was both a philosophy and specific legislation applied to Indians. As a philosophy, the movement encouraged assimilation of Indians as individuals into the mainstream of American society and advocated the end of the federal

government's responsibility for Indian affairs. To accomplish these objectives, termination legislation fell into four general categories: (1) the end of federal treaty relationships and trust responsibilities to certain specified Indian nations; (2) the repeal of federal laws that set Indians apart from other American citizens; (3) the removal of restrictions of federal guardianship and supervision over certain individual Indians; and (4) the transfer of services provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to other federal, state, or local governmental agencies or to Indian nations themselves. Among other things, these "termination laws" of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations ended federally recognized status for 109 Indian groups, totaling 13,263 individuals owning 1,365,801 acres of land; removed restrictions on Indian trust lands to allow for easier leasing and sale; shifted Indian health responsibilities from the BIA to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; and established relocation programs to encourage Indian out-migrations from reservations to urban areas. Even the creation of the Indian Claims Commission in 1946 became tied in with congressional efforts at "getting the United States out of the Indian business." In legislative efforts affecting New York, Congress in effect partially terminated the Iroquois between 1947 and 1954 by transferring civil and criminal jurisdiction to the state and forcing the BIA to close its New York Superintendency. Congress also rearranged the procedures by which the Salamanca lessees made payment on their rentals to the Seneca Nation; however, congressional proponents of complete termination attempted unsuccessfully to abrogate the federal-Iroquois treaty relationship by trying to commute the major federal-Iroquois treaty, the Pickering or Canandaigua Treaty of 1794.²⁰

By late in 1950, Roosevelt had become a vociferous critic of the BIA and the Department of the Interior as a whole. The focus of her criticism was not on the policy direction of termination but on the actions of Commissioner of Indian Affairs Dillon S. Myer. Ironically, Roosevelt had steadfastly defended Myer, when he served as head of War Relocation Authority from 1942 to 1946, in the controversial round-up of Japanese Americans and their forced incarceration in detention camps during World War II. She later saw Myer as an authoritarian bureaucrat who deprived Indian nations "of their right to choose their own counsel..." which she labeled as a "serious infringement on their liberty." She suggested that Myer seek advice "from some of the organizations and some of the men in this country who have had long experience in dealing with our Indian minority group."²¹ Importantly, despite her criticisms of federal Indian policies, as late as 1950, she still continued to see American Indians as merely another oppressed minority in the framework of the emerging civil rights movement and not in the context of federal-Indian nation treaties. She insisted that "for the most part, people are interested in seeing the

Indians integrated into our national life and are working toward again making them full citizens in this land which once belong to them entirely.”²²

By 1957, several major catastrophes affecting Iroquois lands caused a radical shift in Eleanor Roosevelt’s thinking: initial congressional appropriations for the Kinzua Dam; Robert Moses’ and the New York State Power Authority’s plans to build the Tuscarora Reservoir; and the expropriation of Mohawk lands to build the Saint Lawrence Seaway. The first soon entailed the building of a \$125 million dam, near Warren, Pennsylvania, which broke the Pickering or Canandaigua Treaty of 1794; eventually, by 1966 the project flooded more than 9,000 acres of Seneca lands (all acreage below 1,365 feet elevation, including the entire Cornplanter Tract); destroyed the old Cold Spring Longhouse, the ceremonial center of Seneca traditional life; caused the removal of 130 Indian families from the “take area”; and resulted in the relocation of these same families from widely spaced rural surroundings to two suburban-styled housing clusters, one at Steamburg and the other at Jimersontown adjacent to the city of Salamanca. In compensation, Congress awarded the Seneca Nation \$15,000,573 by a law passed, belatedly, in 1964. This act provided \$1,289,060 for direct damages caused by land loss; \$945,573 for indirect damages, compensating the Indians for relocation expenses, loss of timber, and destruction of wildlife; \$387,023 for “cemetery relocation”; \$250,000 for Indian legal and appraisal fees; and \$12,128,917 for “rehabilitation,” which was directed at meeting the Senecas’ urgent need for community buildings, economic development, education, and housing.²³ Sadly, the federal courts had dismissed the Seneca arguments, insisting that the “doctrine of plenary power” allowed Congress to unilaterally sever treaty guarantees, even by a \$1 million line item in the \$800 million House Public Works Appropriations Bill passed on June 19, 1957.²⁴

The Seneca Nation’s unsuccessful fight to save their ancestral lands was the most tragic event of their contemporary history. The Senecas collaborated with a wide variety of supporters in order to try to stop the Kinzua project, including the Indian Committee of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends which stood firmly behind the Indians. During the critical period from 1956 to 1958, the Senecas also received support from the Indian Rights Association and the Central Missionary Guild of the Presbyterian Church of America. From 1959 onward, even after the Senecas’ defeat in federal courts, the coalition broadened and the letter-writing campaign intensified as a result of the activities of Walter Taylor of the American Friends Service, the American Civil Liberties Union, and especially because of the influential writings of Brooks Atkinson in the *New York Times* and the publication of Edmund Wilson’s *Apologies to the Iroquois*.²⁵

Eleanor Roosevelt did more than add her name to the Seneca battle to save their lands. She actively supported her old friend from the New Deal days, Arthur E. Morgan, the former head of the TVA who was by the 1950s president of Antioch College. She also corresponded with opponents of the dam such as Brooks Atkinson and Edmund Wilson, and she wrote a series of columns on the controversy.²⁶

In June, 1960, she explained to the American public that Morgan had developed a better detailed alternative—the [Cattaraugus-] Conewango plan—to the Army Corps of Engineers' project that would not intrude and lead to the expropriation of Seneca lands. The alternative would be substantially cheaper, provide a substantially stable 27-square-mile lake for recreation purposes, and could be built faster than the Army Corps project. Roosevelt pointed out that no Indian treaty would be broken and suggested that the Army Corps would be wise to re-evaluate their particular project since "the Seneca Indians are certainly within their rights to raise strong objections."²⁷ Two months later, Eleanor Roosevelt once again focused on Morgan's alternative plan. She pointed out that even the Interior Department concurred with a House of Representatives resolution, J.J. 703, which had stated that the United States should avoid the taking of Seneca Indian land "unless there is no reasonable alternative."²⁸

On June 7, 1961, Mrs. Roosevelt made her most fervent plea for the protection of Seneca Indian lands. In her column "My Day," she quoted the Pickering Treaty: "The United States will never claim the same, nor disturb the Seneca Nation." She then described the Army Corps project that "would put under water most of the land owned by the Senecas and would drive about 800 persons from the land their tribe has lived on for 167 years." In a passionate way, she added: "To an Indian, land is like a mother." Roosevelt then explained her views. Although recognizing that Congress had the legal right to break a treaty under American law (*Lonewolf v. Hitchcock*, 1903), she insisted that these abrogations of treaties should only be done "when it is necessary for the public good." Hailing Arthur E. Morgan as a long-recognized authority who had masterly performed government service at the TVA, she then promoted his alternative plan, called on her readers to petition President Kennedy and Congress as well as to aid the Seneca-Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends' lobbying campaign against the Army Corps project. To Roosevelt, in her most detailed advocacy of the Seneca position, she equated the flooding of Indian lands with the high-handed immoral actions of communist autocrats. She insisted: "When we fail to face up to a moral problem, we not only harm ourselves at home but place us in a bad light over the world."²⁹

The Seneca Nation homeland was not the only Iroquois land sacrificed in the name of progress in the postwar years. Three other Iroquois communities—

Saint Regis (Akwesasne), Caughnawaga, and Tuscarora—faced in rapid succession the trauma of tribal land loss and outside legislative interference in the years 1954 to 1961. The construction of the Saint Lawrence Seaway and the subsequent building of the reservoir at Tuscarora, two closely related endeavors, set in motion changes in Iroquoia that drastically affect Indian life today. By changing the course of the mighty Saint Lawrence and Niagara Rivers, the Saint Lawrence Seaway Authority, the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, and the Power Authority of the State of New York did more than condemn Indian lands. They industrialized the Saint Lawrence and Niagara frontier regions. By thus transforming this area, they also brought problems of environmental pollution which weakened Indian self-sufficiency and virtually destroyed the Indian fishing and dairy cattle industries.³⁰

At the center of these changes was New York State's master builder, Robert Moses, head of the Power Authority of the State of New York. Moses saw Niagara regional development as a direct outgrowth of his earlier involvement in the promotion of the Saint Lawrence Seaway. Niagara regional development, as did the Saint Lawrence Seaway Project, drastically impinged on the Iroquois and their lands. The Power Authority's construction of the "Tuscarora Reservoir" cost the Tuscarora Indians 550 acres, 495 acres for the power project, and 55 acres for an easement for transmission lines through their reservation. Without question, the battle over the reservoir was the greatest threat that the Tuscaroras had faced in their contemporary existence. The project also helped create a legal and political reawakening among the Iroquois as a whole that still affects Indian life today in New York State.³¹

Roosevelt became involved in these struggles, and her growing advocacy led to a change in her thinking about the future of the American Indians. As early as April, 1958, Roosevelt began to take up the issue of what was occurring to the Tuscarora and Mohawk Indians. She pointed out in "My Day" that Moses, the ultimate power broker, was "apparently claiming some land that belongs to our Indian tribes in the area around Niagara." She insisted that the Tuscarora Indians be fully compensated "or given the opportunity to have an equivalent amount of land of equal value somewhere else if they so desire." Importantly Roosevelt saw her column as a way of educating uninformed New Yorkers about American Indians: "Things happen to the government's wards, the Indians, because most of us are not aware of what is being done to them."³²

Nine months later, an Iroquois Indian wrote Roosevelt complaining of Robert Moses' high-handed treatment of the Mohawks and Tuscaroras. Roosevelt reprinted *the entire letter*. In her preface to the letter, Roosevelt's transformation as a defender of Indian treaty rights was clear. Although she called for improvements in

Indian education and medical care, she spoke mostly about “solemn treaties.” “These treaties should not be broken without their full consent and understanding, even if we think we are offering them something better.” Suggesting that Americans paid “too little attention, and knew too little, about the feelings of the American Indians,” Roosevelt had now apparently become radicalized by the increasing travails that the Iroquois were now facing.³³

Two weeks later, she gave further attention to the Iroquois plight in “My Day.” She quoted from a letter written by Donald Richmond, a young Mohawk, who had written her about the New York State Power Authority’s “acquisition” of Tuscarora lands, state tax and jurisdiction problems, and the “unconstitutional ... violations of treaties made between the Six Nations and the United States of America....”³⁴ Roosevelt’s clearest defense of Indian treaty rights and boldest assertion of Indian nationhood followed Richmond’s letter in the same issue of “My Day.” Critically examining federal Indian policy, she insisted that “under the guise of giving them the right to citizenship, we are allowing predatory interests, sometimes state interests, sometimes groups or individuals to despoil them of their lands.” Indeed, these “lands are all these people have and they own them by treaty with the United States government.”³⁵ She then forthrightly maintained:

What we do for our Indians is watched by people all over the world. And the Indians feel quite rightly, I believe, that our treatment of them is not enhancing the respect for democracy nor the feeling that we try to give all of our people equal freedom in our country and equal justice.

In our efforts to win the trust of the uncommitted nations throughout the world we must remember that the treatment of our own citizens has a great deal to do with the confidence they put in us as a world power.

Both in the United Nations and in our contacts with nations outside there is a realization that a great nation must respect small nations and must keep its word. Otherwise, there is no security for any small nation.

To many people the problem of our own American Indians may seem very small, but it is really a concern of every citizen. For these were the first owners of the country in which we now live and they have a right to have the treaties they made with the U.S. Government respected and carried out with justice.³⁶

Her efforts from 1957 onward to her death in 1962 proved fruitless in saving Seneca, Mohawk, and Tuscarora lands; however, in the long run, the campaign clearly educated Indian and non-Indian alike to the political lobbying that was needed in the future to save tribal lands. No longer would it be so easy to expropriate Indian lands in the United States. Eleanor Roosevelt had been part of a movement that was a turning point in American Indian history. By the early 1970s, a rising generation of Indian Red Power activists and tribal attorneys as well as Warren court decisions were defending the tribal estate.³⁷

In her columns, she frequently emphasized the need for Americans to become informed about American Indians and their concerns and hailed every effort by the media to educate on the subject. To her, in the last years of her life, she increasingly believed and wrote that Americans had much to learn from the Indians. While continuing to bring out the unequal treatment that individual Indians faced, she became increasingly aware that her nation, not just the Soviet empire, had “captive nations” within its midst and were not living up to international agreements, namely treaties, that had guaranteed these indigenous peoples a level of sovereignty.³⁸ As a result, she began to talk of treaty rights and encourage Indian youth in leadership training. During her experiment in training youth for leadership roles at the Fieldston School in the late 1950s and 1960s, she involved American Indians, including Iroquois youth, in the project comprised of youngsters from around the world.³⁹

The Iroquois Indians had long recognized Roosevelt’s “straight tongue” and good-hearted efforts on their behalf. Although the Kinzua Dam, the Saint Lawrence Seaway, and the Tuscarora Reservoir took substantial Iroquois lands, Roosevelt’s efforts led the Indian Defense League of America, the leading Iroquois-led civil and treaty rights association, to cite her for her “active participation in behalf of the Tuscarora Nation and other Indians.”⁴⁰ To this day, her photographic portrait hangs in the main hall of the Tonawanda Indian Community House as a tribute to the First Lady who cared initially for the welfare of Indian peoples and later for the sanctity of Indian treaties.⁴¹ When Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black gave his eloquent dissent in *Tuscarora v. Federal Power Commission* (1960), his words echoed those of his dear friend Eleanor Roosevelt. He insisted that “Great nations like great men keep their word.”⁴² Roosevelt, as we previously cited, had a year earlier insisted that “a great nation must respect small nations and must keep its word...”⁴³

Eleanor Roosevelt’s legacy was in other areas as well. Inspired by the First Lady’s efforts on behalf of young people, Louis R. Bruce, Jr., the former head of Indian programs for the NYA in New York State, along with other prominent Indians such as Ruth Bronson and Will Rogers, Jr., founded Arrow, Inc., in 1949,

devoted to providing economic skills for Indian youth. It should be pointed out that Eleanor Roosevelt was a member of Arrow, Inc., one of the only Indian organizations to which she belonged in her life. Indeed, in “My Day” she promoted Arrow, Inc., and its objectives. In Bruce’s own words, his involvement in the affairs of the National Congress of American Indians and his subsequent appointment as Commissioner of Indian Affairs “would not have happened if [he] had not been encouraged by Eleanor Roosevelt in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.”

In sum, Roosevelt’s changing attitudes about American Indians reflect a larger change in American liberalism. In the 1930s to 1950s, most liberals continued to view the incorporation of American Indians, in a civil rights context, under American law as simply the most desirable goal. By the late 1950s, increasing numbers of liberals, including Eleanor Roosevelt, were viewing American Indian nations in the context of international relations of the Cold War, interpreting them as “captive nations,” being taken advantage of by states and private interests in violation of solemn federal treaties. In some ways, her attitudes, and those of Justice Black’s minority opinion in 1960, predicted the Warren Court’s decisions of the early 1970s, namely that the federal government had a fiduciary responsibility under treaties and the Trade and Intercourse Acts to protect the Iroquois, specifically the Oneidas, against state, county, and private interests. Thus, Eleanor Roosevelt and her liberalism not only had great bearing on the civil rights movement but influenced the direction of Indian policies even after her death in 1962.

Notes

1. Allida M. Black, *Casting Her Own Shadow: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Shaping of Postwar Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), chapter four.
2. “My Day,” August 25, 1950, Eleanor Roosevelt MSS., FDR Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York. [Hereafter ER MSS., FDR Library.]
3. *Ibid.*
4. G. Edward White, *The Eastern Establishment and the Western Experience: The West of Frederic Remington, Theodore Roosevelt and Owen Wister* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 6-30, 184-202; Hermann Hagedorn, *Roosevelt in the Badlands* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921); William T. Hagan, *Theodore Roosevelt and Six Friends of the Indian* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997). For Roosevelt’s views about the Iroquois, see Laurence M. Hauptman, “Governor Theodore Roosevelt and the Indians of New York State,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 119 (February 1975): 1-7.
5. Historic Marker, FDR Estate, Hyde Park.
6. Laurence M. Hauptman, Fieldnotes on a trip to Campobello Island, June, 1981. In “My Day” on August 25, 1950, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote: “There is a little Indian village north of Eastport where the Indians still sell some of their baskets and other wares in the town....” ER MSS., FDR Library.

7. Ethelda Bedford and Bette E. Barber, "The Island Beloved by F.D.R." *Yankee*, May 1956; William G. Wing, "Sunrise at an Isle [Campobello] of Friendship," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 12, 1963; both found in: Campobello Vertical File, FDR Library. Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor: The Years Alone* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), pp. 325-326.
8. Interviews of Louis R. Bruce, Jr., December 11, 1980, Washington, D.C.; and Nameé Henricks, May 20, 1980, Penn Yan, New York.
9. *Ibid.* For Bruce's career see Joseph H. Cash, "Louis Rook Bruce," in *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1924-1977*, Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola, eds. (Lincoln, Neb., 1979), pp. 333-340. Louis R. Bruce, Jr., "Indian Trail to Success," *Readers' Digest* (Nov. 1949), Reprint of *American Magazine* article (Sept. 1949) found in National Congress of American Indians MSS., Box 17, Series 4, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. "Louis R. Bruce, Ex-Commissioner of Indian Affairs is Dead at 83," *New York Times*, May 4, 1989.
10. Louis R. Bruce, Jr., to Governor Herbert H. Lehman, March 18, 1938, Governor Herbert H. Lehman MSS., Microfilm Reel 73, Onondaga Nation of Indians, Butler Library, Columbia University; "Indians Youth Train for Camp Service," *New York Times*, April 24, 1938; Louis R. Bruce, Jr., "Foreword," in (NYA) Indian Counselor's Handbook of Legends and Information on the Iroquois (Washington, D.C., 1940), found in NYA Records, Publications File, Series 330, New York, RG119, National Archives [NA].
11. "Dr. Parker Praises NYA's Indian Program," Rochester [N.Y.] *Democrat and Chronicle*, April 20, 1939, Scrapbook, Rochester Museum and Science Center; Interview of Louis R. Bruce, Jr., Dec. 11, 1980, Washington, D.C. "Indians Youth Train for Camp Service," *New York Times*, April 24, 1938, sec. II, p. 4; "Young Indians at Camp Outing," *Niagara Falls* [N.Y.] *Gazette*, June 15, 1938, Scrapbook, Rochester Museum and Science Center; "Onondaga Indians Cling to Traditions of Ancestors," *Syracuse* [N.Y.] *Post Standard*, Nov. 30, 1941, sec. II, p. 26; "NYA Dinner to Be Given By Onondagas," *Syracuse Herald*, June 16, 1936, p. 20.
12. Lester W. Herzog (WPA), Remarks at the Dedication of the Tonawanda Community House, May 13, 1939, in *Tonawanda Indian Reservation Community House*. Pamphlet found in Lieutenant Governor Charles Poletti MSS., File: "Henricks, Mrs. Walter A. and Tonawanda Indians." Butler Library, Columbia University.
13. Interview of Nameé Henricks, May 20, 1980, Penn Yan, N.Y. In appreciation for her help, the Senecas later gave her an Indian name "Sah-nee-weh" and adopted her into the nation. Nameé Henricks to Governor Herbert H. Lehman, Dec. 10, 12, 1937, Jan. 27, Feb. 4, April 16, 1938, Governor Herbert H. Lehman MSS., Microfilm Reel 97, Tonawanda Indian Reservation, Butler Library, Columbia University; Henricks to Lieutenant Governor Charles Poletti, July 24, 1940, April 17, Nov. 12, Nov. 24, 1941, Lieutenant Governor Charles Poletti MSS., File: "Henricks, Mrs. Walter A. and Tonawanda Indians," Butler Library, Columbia University; Henricks to Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Nov. 19, 1936, Box 1384, Series 100, File: "Mrs. Walter Henricks, 1936"; Jan. 3, 1937, Box 1503, Series 100, File: "Hea-Hen, 1937," ER MSS, FDR Library. For more on Nameé Henricks, see Laurence M. Hauptman, *The Iroquois and the New Deal* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1981), pp. 127-134, 135 (illustration), 215-216.
14. Eleanor Roosevelt to Ellen Woodward [FERA], July 13, 1935; to Fred Daniels [FERA], Oct. 21, 1935; to Lester Herzog [WPA], Oct. 26, 1935; to John Collier [Commissioner, BIA], Oct. 30, Nov. 9, 1935; to Herbert Lehman [Governor, NYS], Dec. 10, 1935; Malvina T. Scheider [Secretary to Mrs. Roosevelt] to John Harris [WPA], June 4, 1936; to J.R. McCarl [Comptroller General of U.S.], June 27, 1936, ER MSS, FDR Library.
15. For the Iroquois legal challenges to conscription, see *Ex Parte Green* 123 F. 2d 862 (1941); *United States v. Claus* 63 F. Supp. 433 (1944); *Albany v. United States* 152 F. 2d 267 (1945).

- Interviews of Louis R. Bruce, Jr., Dec. 11, 1980, Washington, D.C.; Ernest Benedict (Mohawk), Sept. 10-11, 1982, July 30, 1983, Akwesasne Mohawk Indian Reservation; and Edison Mt. Pleasant (Tuscarora), Oct. 20-21, Nov. 30, 1984, Rome, N.Y. and Tuscarora Indian Reservation. Ernest Benedict, Louis R. Bruce, Jr.'s cousin, was arrested for resisting the draft. Edison Mt. Pleasant resisted but was drafted despite having lost part of a finger. Both men later "enlisted" to avoid further prosecution. According to Bruce, Mrs. Roosevelt intervened on behalf of Benedict behind the scenes with the local selective service authorities to allow for Benedict's release from jail and subsequent enlistment. For an overall analysis of this controversy, see Laurence M. Hauptman, *The Iroquois Struggle for Survival* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 5-9. For Roosevelt's column on the draft, see Eleanor Roosevelt, "If You Ask Me," *Good Housekeeping*, LIX (Sept. 1942), 27, 131.
16. Nora Henhawk to Eleanor Roosevelt, Nov. 25, 1942; Walter V. Woehlke to Henhawk, Feb. 9, 1943, BIA Central Files, 1940, Acc. #53A-367, Box 1059, File #14726-1951-926 (N.Y.), Record Group 75, NA.
 17. Roosevelt worked closely with Felix Cohen on these issues. See Felix Cohen to Eleanor Roosevelt, June 18, 1949 and Oct. 25, 1950, Box 3271, ER MSS., ER Gen. Corresp., 1945-1952, File: Cohan/Cohen, FDR Library. For *Harrison v. Laveen*, see Laurence M. Hauptman, *Tribes and Tribulations: Misconceptions About American Indians and Their Histories* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), chapter 9.
 18. For the Iroquois appeal to Roosevelt, see Julius Cook (Mohawk) to Mrs. F.D. Roosevelt, Jan. 24, 1948, BIA Central Files, 1940-1952, acc. #53A367, Box 1055, File #3040-1948-052 (N.Y.), RG75, NA. Louis R. Bruce, Jr., as well as his father, favored state jurisdiction. Hauptman, *The Iroquois Struggle for Survival*, pp. 50-56.
 19. Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 37, 171; Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), pp. 45-46.
 20. Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indian* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), II: 1013-1059; Charles F. Wilkinson & Eric Biggs, "The Evolution of the Termination Policy," *American Indian Law Review* 5 (1980): 139-184.
 21. See footnote 19 and "My Day," Dec. 30, 1950, ER MSS., FDR Library.
 22. "My Day," Dec. 30, 1950, ER MSS., FDR Library.
 23. Hauptman, *The Iroquois Struggle for Survival*, pp. 85-122; Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *Now That the Buffalo's Gone: A Study of Today's American Indians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), pp. 127-150.
 24. See footnote 23.
 25. *Ibid.* See also Edmund Wilson, *Apologies to the Iroquois* (1959; reprint, Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1991); for Brooks Atkinson, "Critic at Large: Proposed Dam that Would Violate Treaty with the Senecas Poses Moral Question," *New York Times*, April 12, 1961; for the Society of Friends, see Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends, Kinzua Project of the Indian Committee, *The Kinzua Dam Controversy: A Practical Solution—Without Shame* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1961).
 26. See footnote 23. For Morgan and his ideas, see *Dams and Other Disasters* (Boston: P. Sargent, 1971).
 27. "My Day," June 17, 1960, ER MSS., FDR Library.
 28. "My Day," Aug. 22, 1960, ER MSS., FDR Library.
 29. "My Day," June 7, 1961, ER MSS., FDR Library.

30. See Hauptman, *The Iroquois Struggle for Survival*, pp. 123-151.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-178. Barbara Graymont, ed., *Fighting Tuscarora: The Autobiography of Chief Clinton Rickard* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1973), p. 138; Robert Moses, *Working for the People* (New York: Harper, 1956), p. 173. For the long-range implications of these "takes," see Laurence M. Hauptman, *Formulating American Indian Policies in New York State, 1970-1986* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1988).
32. "My Day," April 18, 1958, ER MSS., FDR Library.
33. "My Day," Jan. 8, 1959, ER MSS., FDR Library.
34. "My Day," Jan. 23, 1959, ER MSS., FDR Library.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. Hauptman, *Tribes and Tribulations*, chapter 9; Hauptman, *The Iroquois Struggle for Survival*, chapter 12.
38. "My Day," Dec. 3, 1958, Jan. 23, Aug. 10, 1959, Oct. 3, 1960, ER MSS., FDR Library.
39. Interviews of Algernon Black [Ethical Culture Institute], June 5, 1988, St. John Fisher College, Rochester, N.Y.; George H.J. Abrams, Aug. 26, 1983, Allegany Indian Reservation. Dr. Black worked with Eleanor Roosevelt coordinating the Fieldston project. Mr. Abrams, a Seneca Indian, was a youngster in the project.
40. Lehigh Antone [Grand Secretary, Indian Defense League of America] to Mrs. Roosevelt, March 16, 1960, ER Gen. Corresp., 1957-1962, Inaugural-Indoor Sports Club, Inc., ER MSS., FDR Library.
41. Laurence M. Hauptman, Seneca Fieldnotes, 1973-1997. I have visited the Tonawanda Indian Community House at least twice a year since 1973.
42. 805 S.Ct. 543 (1960), *FPC v. Tuscarora Indian Nation*.
43. "My Day," Jan. 23, 1959, ER MSS., FDR Library.
44. For Eleanor Roosevelt's membership, see Receipt of Membership in Arrow, Inc. "assisting American Indian youth." In Pamphlets File: Indians, North American, ER MSS., FDR Library. For Arrow, Inc., see Howard Vernon, "Arrow, Inc." (1949) in *Native American Voluntary Organizations*, Armand S. La Potin, ed. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987), p. 43. It should be noted that Roosevelt promoted the work of Arrow, Inc. See "My Day," June 26, 1958, ER MSS., FDR Library. It should also be noted that Eleanor Roosevelt was selective in choosing her membership in organizations. Although supporting the activities of the Association on American Indian Affairs in her column, she rejected membership. See Oliver La Farge to Eleanor Roosevelt and accompanying reply, June 16, 1939, Box 1508-1509, ER MSS., Series 100, Folder: Lac-Lan, 1939, FDR Library.