

S. 2152 - Mt. Pleasant Indian School

January 22, 1934

My Dear Mr. Chairman:

In further reference to your request of January 11 for a report to the Senate committee on bill (S. 2152) to grant certain property to the State of Michigan for institutional purposes, the following is submitted:

The Mount Pleasant Indian School is one of a number of boarding schools for Indian children that have become unnecessary because of the strengthening of legal resources for the care of Indian children. Most of the 1,600 Indian children of school age in the State of Michigan are already attending public day schools with other children of the State, and reports indicate that they are on the whole, well adjusted to this type of education. The school plant will, therefore, not be needed by the Indian Service as a part of its program of education.

In the meantime, the State of Michigan is urgently in need of institutional facilities for the care of dependents. The Governor of Michigan telegraphed me on January 4 as follows: "Michigan at this time lacks facilities of caring for 2,791 persons who have been committed by the courts to State institutions."

It is understood that provision can be made for the 45 Indian children now based in the Mount Pleasant dormitories. It is believed that our experience in Michigan shows that Michigan is able and willing to absorb its comparatively small number of Indian children and that the needs of the Indian children will be amply safeguarded.

The proposed transfer of a Federal Indian school plant to the State does not constitute a new policy. Congress has authorized such action in the past in the case of Indian schools at Ford Lewis and Grand Junction, Colo., and other institutions, and the language of this measure is similar to that used on previous occasions.

I therefore recommend favorable action on S.2152.

Sincerely yours,

Harold L. Ickes  
Secretary of the Interior

SAME LETTER SENT SAME DATE TO EDGAR HOWARD, CHAIRMAN ON  
INDIAN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

indian/s. 2152

*transcribed*

May 28, 1934

Honorable Harold L. Ickes  
Secretary of the Interior  
Washington, D.C.

My dear Sir:

In accordance with an Act of Congress, approved by the President on February 19th, 1934, granting certain property to the State of Michigan for institutional purposes, I hereby accept for the State of Michigan the property known and designated as the "Mount Pleasant Indian School", located at Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

As Governor of the state, in accepting this grant, I acknowledge the condition that the State of Michigan will receive and care for in State institutions Indians resident within the state on entire equality with persons of other races and without cost to the Federal government.

I also recognize the condition that the right is reserved by the Secretary of the Interior to retain until July 1st, 1934, dormitory and other space needed for the housing and care of Indian pupils now accommodated at said School.

Respectfully yours,

(William A. Comstock)  
Governor of Michigan

*transcribed*

October 29, 1934

Mr. Frank Christy, Supt.  
Tomah School,  
Tomah, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Christy:

We have discussed the High Island School situation and have come to the conclusion that this is not a situation where we can use education funds to provide a teacher, especially in view of the conditions under which the Mount Pleasant School was turned over to the State.

This law-- a copy of which is enclosed in case you have not received one-- provides that Indians should be accepted in State Institutions on entire equality with persons of other races and without cost to the Federal Government. We interpret that to mean that public schools in Michigan shall not charge tuition for Indian pupils. If we were to provide the teacher to High Island this year, I fear that the effect of this law might be weakened.

What would you think of our calling this situation to the attention of the state Department of Education and of the Governor?

Sincerely yours,

(William Zimmerman, Jr.)

Assistant Commissioner

*transcribed*

November 11, 1935

Hon. Albert J. Engel,  
House of Representatives

My dear Mr. Engel:

This is in reference to that part of your letter of September 21, quoting from a petition By Michigan Indians, which relates to education.

These Indians are all located within reach of public schools to which they have free access on the same basis as white people. Not all of the families, either Indian or white have high schools immediately available. Under the terms of the act approved February 19, 1934(48 Stat. L. 555) granting to the State of Michigan for institutional purposes the former Mt. Pleasant Indian School, there is stated as a condition precedent to the grant, that Indians resident within the State of Michigan will be accepted in state institutions on entire equality with persons of other races and without cost to the federal government. Provisions for boarding home placement may be made in cases of especially promising students living beyond reach of high school facilities. In addition, Indian children of Michigan who qualify under the regulations are receiving assistance in the way of higher education and vocational training. We are not overlooking the educational needs of Michigan Indian children although we think it is to their interest to attend public schools, high schools, college and trade schools with members of other races rather than to establish separate schools for the Indians. Of course, under existing law providing for their education by the State, such separate schools would be impracticable and moreover there are no funds available which could be used for the purpose.

Sincerely yours,

(William Zimmerman, Jr.)

Assistant Commissioner

*transcribed*