BRADDOCK'S CONGRESSMAN M. CLYDE KELLY AND INDIAN POLICY REFORM, 1919-1928

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Few Western Pennsylvania mill-town congressmen are known for their advocacy of native-American rights. Braddock's United States Representative Melville Clyde Kelly¹ was a striking, though enigmatic exception. A visible, outspoken, and persistent critic of United States Indian policy, particularly during the half decade immediately preceding the grant of citizenship to native Americans in June 1924, Congressman Kelly, unfortunately, left little behind to explain his vigorous involvement in the Indian rights movement. Nevertheless, his castigating critiques of the Bureau of Indian Affairs were so biting and his support of native American rights so nobly spoken that Representative Kelly's activities merit recounting, even though his motives may be open to speculation. In the words of Kelly's friend, Carlton G. Ketchum, "he deserves to be remembered."²

¹ So far as is known, there is no collection of Kelly's correspondence extant. The information presented in this article resulted from a search for correspondence and other personal papers of the early twentieth-century native American rights leader, Carlos Montezuma, M.D. (Yavapai, ca. 1867-1923).
The native American leaders of the early twentieth century who were visible to whites had largely adopted the economic and political precept of the Progressive Era, "organize or perish." The Wounded Knee generation of resistance fighters was fast yielding to the "educated" Indians, persons trained in both the formal and hidden curricula of white schools and colleges — native Americans who were both comfortable and restless in two worlds. Clearly by the 1920s, Indian chiefs were also doctors, lawyers, and clergy of major Christian denominations, able and articulate leaders intent upon using a formidable, often inhospitable, political system to preserve and advance their displaced and weary people. This new generation of Indian leaders creatively and boldly grasped political leverage within the American Constitutional system, demonstrating mastery of the informational and pressure techniques of the new order. It was not uncommon to see Indian leaders coopt potentially useful forces within political and economic elites, some being large organizations like Philadelphia's Indian Rights Association (IRA) and others being highly independent individuals such as Braddock's M. Clyde Kelly.

Melville Clyde Kelly, born on August 4, 1883, in Bloomfield, Muskingum County, Ohio, studied at Muskingum College, taught school, and worked in business until 1901, when he became city editor of the Braddock Daily News.\(^3\) By 1907, Kelly had consolidated several Braddock daily and weekly newspapers under his control.\(^4\) His papers, supporting Progressive Republican causes and candidates, apparently were regarded as solid, reputable publications with at least one observer awarding such terms as "boldness and truthfulness" and "frankness and fearlessness" to describe them.\(^5\) Although defeated in a 1908 race for the lower house of the Pennsylvania legislature, Kelly was elected to that chamber in 1910. Two years later, he won election to the United States House of Representatives from Pennsylvania's Thirtieth District. With the exception of 1915-1917, Congressman Kelly served this district until his defeat in 1934.

*Congressional Record* indexes show that Representative Kelly was involved with the issues, great and small, of his day: patronage, pork-barrel, pensions, private relief measures, prohibition (Kelly was dry), and women's suffrage (Kelly favored it). He also supported jobs for veterans, passport control, death to spies, daylight savings time, na-
tionalization of railways, postal efficiency, airmail, community centers, suspension of immigration, travel of Civil War veterans to the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a national homeland for Jews, a memorial to Pennsylvania’s Governor Andrew Gregg Curtin, the Ohio River-Lake Erie Waterway, electromechanical voting, vocational training, the World Court, cheap sales of surplus food, a bridge at Monongahela, and decorating courthouses with condemned cannons. He opposed lynching, false advertising, mail-order firearms, and hazing at the United States Naval Academy. At various times, Congressman Kelly served on such House committees as Rules, Alcoholic Liquor Traffic, War Claims, Post Office and Post Roads, and Indian Affairs. Outside Congress, Kelly’s gregarious nature led him to join many organizations, one of his most proud affiliations being the influential and prestigious Pennsylvania Society of Washington, over which he presided in the early 1920s.

Kelly’s published writings ranged over a number of topics, with his forceful reform rhetoric a common denominator uniting them. His *Machine Made Legislation*, published after a term in the Pennsylvania General Assembly, reflected shock, dismay, and outrage at the operations of the legislature’s party regulars. Apparently brusquely disabused of notions that the Pennsylvania legislature was a democratic body, Kelly seemed to be setting forth a text for his own career in *Machine Made Legislation*. “When good men support . . . vicious measures because they are regular,” he wrote, “the danger point has been reached.” “No government can long endure,” Kelly insisted, “when the people lose their reverence for the laws and their faith in the justice of their meaning.” 6 In his 1921 *Community Capitol*, Kelly urged using public schools as foci of neighborhood action; and his 1931 *United States Postal Policy* posed various management and labor reforms for that time-honored patronage free-trade zone. 7 In addition to these books, Kelly authored numerous articles appearing in such reform journals as *American Indian Tepee*, *The Indian*, *American Indian Magazine/Quarterly Journal of the Society of American Indians*, *Sunset Magazine*, *To-Morrow*, and Henry Ford’s *Dearborn Independent*.

Unlike many whites involved in native American rights activities, Braddock’s Congressman Kelly did not seem to seek out the Indians—they sought him. In November 1919, the secretary-treasurer of the

nation’s first intertribal Indian lobby, the Society of American Indians (SAI), recommended Kelly to a key coworker and publisher of the movement’s most forceful newspaper, Chicago’s Yavapai physician, Dr. Carlos Montezuma. Advising Dr. Montezuma about preparations for upcoming House Indian affairs committee hearings in Chicago, the SAI’s Thomas G. Bishop, a Yakima deeply involved in Washington state land and water issues, assured Montezuma that “our FRIEND — is M. Clyde Kelly . . . he is TRUE BLUE. You can confide in him.”

Doubtless the frankly stated, independent positions of this newly appointed member of the House Indian affairs committee brought him to the attention of the SAI’s secretary-treasurer, the organization’s only officer to reside in Washington, D.C., and monitor of political developments at close range.

Thomas G. Bishop’s trust in Congressman Kelly was not misplaced. With the presentation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ (BIA) annual appropriation bill in January 1920, the Braddock representative launched the first of his annual assaults on the BIA. Annoyed that “making free American citizens of those original owners of all America will never be completed,” Kelly attacked what he felt were the BIA’s capricious and painstakingly slow means to determine Indian competency prior to extending citizenship — then a requirement under the 1887 Dawes Act. Insisting that BIA footdragging was merely designed to keep the bureau in business, Congressman Kelly virtually echoed Dr. Montezuma and others when he charged that “the Indian Bureau is a wonderful institution — for self-perpetuation. It is a government within a government.”

From mid-February to early April 1920, Kelly repeatedly sought to direct the attention of the House to the land problem — specifically timber lease disputes — of seventy-one tribes in Washington west of the Cascades. Unhappy not only with the small size of Indian land allotments in Washington, but also with the manner in which they were meted out, Kelly insisted on legislation permitting the western Washington tribes to sue in the United States Court of Claims. However, such efforts were in vain.

When the BIA budget came up in early 1921, Kelly’s opening salvos on January 20 were aimed at the wily methods of western
water users' associations. He claimed an irrigation project involving Montana's Flathead Indians was much larger — hence, more costly — than what was actually needed by the Indians. Kelly pointed out that a Montana water users' association stood to profit from fees levied against the Flatheads for Indian use of water carried by a canal crossing Indian land, a canal the Flatheads opposed in the first place. Kelly was especially disturbed by the fact that Flathead money under BIA trust was to be used for a project primarily benefiting non-native farmers and ranchers.  

Returning to this theme later in the day, Kelly again condemned the BIA for using tribal funds “in ways they [the Indians] know not of and desire not.” Kelly charged the BIA with bureaucratic confusion and profusion which forced Indians “to bow to arbitrary decrees and despotic commands framed by individuals whose natural desire is to extend their own power.” Continuing, Kelly compared the Indian situation to that of immigrants he had likely observed in Braddock, noting that new arrivals “are not herded off into reservations” with special agents and rules, and that “if they were, the second generation would be as foreign as the newcomers and would remain alien stock forever.” Calling for termination of the BIA, Kelly proclaimed that “the Indian Bureau can not exist without the Indians” and invoked the Old Testament summons oft-employed by slavery abolitionists and Indian rights workers alike, “Let this people go.”  

On another occasion in January 1921, consideration of the Indian bureau's budget brought Kelly to his feet. The BIA, Kelly insisted, was “an empire within an empire . . . a United States within the United States.” Through “yearly accretion of funds” Kelly demonstrated that the bureau entered upon a number of activities such as irrigation, health, and forestry solely on the basis of annual appropriations and without due legislative authority. In the course of these remarks, Kelly eagerly entered the fray surrounding the Minnesota Red Lake Ojibwes' tribal funds. Kelly demanded that their funds not be tapped by the BIA without approval from the local tribal council. He also insisted that Ojibwe land be allotted according to the Dawes Act, if the Ojibwes desired allotments, “so that the Indians will be finally removed from the care of the government and become self-sustaining.”  

Congressman Kelly's remarks during the House review of the

11 Ibid., 66:3, Jan. 20, 1921, 1702-3.
12 Ibid., 1714-15.
13 Ibid., 66:3, Jan. 15, 1921, 1480.
14 Ibid., 1486-87.
1921 BIA appropriations request drew widespread and favorable attention. With Republican Warren G. Harding entering the White House in March 1921, the days of Woodrow Wilson’s Texas warhorse, Indian Commissioner Cato Sells, were numbered. Key Republicans were casting about for available persons, and Kelly’s name was put forth by General Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Though forced from Carlisle nearly a decade and a half earlier by Theodore Roosevelt’s Indian commissioner, Pratt retained some influence with GOP regulars. Kelly’s concept of Indian assimilation through abolition of the BIA was wholly consistent with the thinking of General Pratt and his coterie.

Pratt used his influence with the Los Angeles Times to secure editorial endorsement of Kelly’s Indian reform ideas. In a February 18, 1921, editorial entitled, “Abolish the Indian Bureau,” the Los Angeles Times congratulated Kelly on having “made a careful study of the Indian appropriations made by Congress . . . .” The Los Angeles newspaper blasted BIA expenditures as a “waste of public funds . . . perpetuating a system of human slavery . . . .” and concluded that people would disband the BIA if they knew the “true conditions.”

Meantime, Pratt contacted his Indian alter ego, Carlos Montezuma, listing Kelly at the head of a slate of six “eligible” contenders for the post of Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Pratt confided to the Chicago Yavapai: “I am in no dilemma as to the kind of man for the place and I introduce to you my kind of a man by sending herewith a copy of a speech by a member of the House Indian Committee from Pennsylvania. He is a self-made man and like Mr. Harding, a successful newspaper man.”

Carlos Montezuma, also an ardent believer in Indian assimilation through abolition of the BIA and eager to have a person sharing his views in the Indian commissioner’s chair, published Kelly’s January 1921 speech in its entirety in his next Wassaja, the feisty and widely known Indian rights monthly. Montezuma urged Kelly to become available, but Kelly demurred, preferring to continue in the service of his congressional district. He feared that seeking the Indian commissioner’s post would be contrary to his pledge to represent his constituents in Braddock. Kelly reassured Montezuma, however, that he

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15 Los Angeles Times, Jan. 18, 1921, quoted in American Indian Tepee 2 (Spring 1921): 10-11.
16 Ibid.
17 Pratt to Montezuma, Feb. 8, 1921, box 1, file 4, Papers of Carlos Montezuma, University of Arizona, Special Collections, Tucson (hereafter cited as PCM, UA, followed by box and file numbers).
had studied the Indian situation for years, formulating reform ideas that he proposed to carry out.\textsuperscript{19}

Kelly was doubtless aware that his increasingly independent views on Indian policy, while eagerly savored by some reformers, endangered his relations with the House Republican leadership, a possible cause for his elimination from the Committee on Indian Affairs in late 1921. There is not sufficient evidence to say whether Kelly declined offers of support for the Indian commissioner’s job for the reasons given Carlos Montezuma or from a realistic appraisal of his political fortunes. The \textit{Congressional Record}, however, shows Kelly at frequent odds with bureau supporters on both sides of the aisle. Kelly’s remarks brought sometimes snappy rebuttals from Homer Snyder, the New York Republican chairing the House Indian affairs committee, and Carl Hayden, the Arizona Democrat who loyally defended the bureau from his side of the House. In addition, Kelly was subjected to frequent and harsh questioning by Oklahoma and upper Great Lakes members who professed expertise on the Indian question. Kelly’s assertively noncompromising ways in what he considered matters of principle sharply reduced his effectiveness as an Indian policy reformer. Kelly had apparently learned all he wished to know about compromise during his Harrisburg years: “Compromise has always resulted in postponing needed action until that action becomes many times more dangerous and difficult. It has never prevented the inevitable outcome and never will.”\textsuperscript{20} Kelly wanted immediate action in the field of Indian policy reform and, by the 1920s, it was evident that the movement for some sort of citizenship bill was running strong.

Kelly was not the first congressman to take an interest in universal native American citizenship. The idea was hardly novel, and many Indians had obtained citizenship over the years. However, “competency tests” and surrender of interest in tribal property were prerequisite to Indian citizenship. These and other requirements combined to make citizenship unattractive or unavailable to most Indians. Each year between 1918 and 1921, Oklahoma’s Cherokee Democratic Representative Charles D. Carter introduced Indian citizenship bills. These measures required competency certificates issued by the Indian commissioner and provided for surrender of interest in tribal property. Bills clearing the House failed in the Senate.\textsuperscript{21} Nonetheless, Kelly

\textsuperscript{19} Kelly to Montezuma, Mar. 3, 1921, PCM.
\textsuperscript{20} Kelly, \textit{Machine Made Legislation}, 60.
remained convinced that citizenship would pave the way for Indian assimilation and eventual abolition of the BIA.

When Kelly informed General Pratt in February 1921 that the House Indian affairs committee, largely at Kelly’s urging, would soon bring an Indian citizenship bill to the floor, Pratt, in a lengthy response, insisted on assimilation first with citizenship guaranteed under the Constitution. He viewed it as a simple matter of removing social and economic disabilities, then allowing the Constitution to come into play. Undaunted, Kelly assured the general: “We are planning to bring up the Citizen Bill before the end of the session and, if so, I will make a speech which will sum up my observations for the past two years of intensive study.” But, perhaps hedging his bet, Kelly closed his letter to Pratt with hopes that “we may both live to see our desire in this important matter carried out. . . .”

Congressman Kelly delivered the promised speech on August 4, 1921, reprinting hundreds of copies for distribution. In it, he declared: “There is a kind of savage irony in our habit of groaning over the wrongs of the Armenians by the Turks, the harrying of the Christians in Bulgaria and the Jews in Rumania and Russia, when our own hands are stained with the blood and plunder of the original Americans.” Calling for immediate abolition of the BIA and extension of citizenship to all native Americans, Kelly reminded the House that the Indian “faced the German shells” but “then when he returned he was met with the Hohenzollern rule of the Indian Bureau.” “They took a fighting chance in the Great War. They should have a fighting chance for freedom. They helped to free the world from armed brutality; we should now free them from autocratic bureaucracy.” Contending that Indians freed from the reservation system could survive without being bilked any worse than when under BIA tutelage, Kelly wryly observed: “It is [a] strange doctrine in America that a law-abiding race must be disfranchised and kept in bondage in order that lawless citizens may be restrained from preying upon them.”

Carlos Montezuma and his attorney, Joseph W. Latimer of New York, quickly wrote congratulatory messages to Kelly. Both Montezuma and Latimer eagerly agreed to supply Kelly with mailing lists

22 Pratt to Kelly, Feb. 16, 1921, box 17, file 408, Papers of Richard Henry Pratt, Yale University, Beinecke Library, New Haven (hereafter cited as RHP, YB, followed by box and file numbers).
23 Kelly to Pratt, Feb. 24, 1921, ibid., 6:148.
25 Latimer to Kelly, Aug. 10, 1921, Kelly to Montezuma, Aug. 11, 1921; Kelly to Latimer, Aug. 11, 1921, PCM.
and to distribute copies of Kelly's speech personally. At the same time, laudatory coverage was given Kelly in newspapers ranging from *The Christian Science Monitor* to Montezuma's *Wassaja*. As late as September 1922, Montezuma raved in *Wassaja*: "Would that some God-fearing man of power and influence might read the speech of Congressman Kelly, of Pennsylvania, delivered in the House, in August of last year..." General Pratt called the Kelly speech "the most logical expose within my knowledge ever made in Congress of the causes which have prevented the civilization and absorption of the Indians into our citizenship." Thanking the general for his kind words, Kelly assured him: "I am convinced that the House of Representatives is ready to take constructive action on this question, if we can lead the way."  

If not for leadership, the way was certainly cleared for a mass of correspondence over the next two years from General Pratt to Congressman Kelly, advising him on a variety of points dealing with the history, policies, and practices of the BIA and legislative tactics to reduce its presence. Kelly's responses to the aging general became brief, flaccid, and temporizing notes barely acknowledging receipt of the general's letters and saying little. The average letter from Pratt to Kelly was roughly three pages, single-spaced, whereas Kelly's to Pratt were usually one or two short, double-spaced paragraphs. By early 1923, the correspondence dealt with Washington's Pennsylvania Society almost as much as with Indian citizenship.

Meantime, Joseph Latimer cultivated a close correspondence with Kelly, whom he considered "a very sincere and deep friend of the Indians." Montezuma also kept in touch with Kelly, corresponding with him and visiting his Washington office. Perhaps alarmed that Kelly was losing his interest in total reform of Indian policy, Montezuma pleaded with Kelly in early February 1922 not to come under the sway of those who would merely do cosmetic surgery on the BIA, insisting that "to compromise in the least would be to weaken what you have urged in your grand and sublime utterances, on the abolition of the Indian Bureau, let the Indians [be] free and bestow upon them citizenship." Calling for "a godly action on the part of

26 Latimer to Kelly, Aug. 12, 1921; Kelly to Latimer, Aug. 15, 1921, *ibid.*
27 Pratt to Kelly, Oct. 3, 1921, RHP, YB 17:413; *Wassaja* 6 (Aug. 1921) : 3.
28 *Wassaja* 8 (Sept. 1922) : 2.
30 See RHP, YB 17 :413-16, 6 :148.
31 Latimer to Pratt, Jan. 18, 1922, RHP, YB 6 :161.
The Congress,” Montezuma encouraged Kelly: “There is no use of skinning the Indian Bureau and dispose of its carcass until you have killed the blood sucking beast.” 32 Pratt, receiving a copy of this exchange, wrote Montezuma: “Your letter to Mr. Kelly was all right. I could stand behind every statement you made.” Pratt continued: “A letter from Mr. Kelly advises that something is likely to happen soon, but he does not say what.” In closing, the general lamented: “I am not strong and well enough to take hold and fight.” 33

While unsuccessfully attempting to check such BIA practices as “taking money out of Indian funds without the knowledge and consent of the Indians” and generally trying to break what he termed the “iron circle of the Indian Bureau system.” Kelly busied himself behind the scenes on behalf of Indian citizenship during 1922. 34 Between late July and early November, frequent correspondence between Joseph Latimer and Kelly disclosed Latimer’s approaches to Roger Nash Baldwin of the American Civil Liberties Union and Matthew K. Sniffen of Philadelphia’s Indian Rights Association. By fall, Latimer informed Kelly that both organizations were sympathetic to an Indian citizenship bill, but that the IRA was unwilling to consider abolition of the BIA. 35 Agreeing that “a citizenship measure should be first, as that will be the gateway through which we can accomplish all the other things desired,” Kelly promised to discuss with Latimer the possibility of his introducing such a bill. 36 Latimer informed Montezuma that the IRA’s Matthew Sniffen “agreed with me that he could see no reason why Congressman Kelly is not the logical man to introduce such a bill.” 37 On October 31, 1922, Latimer conveyed to Kelly the text of a citizenship bill drafted by the IRA. 38 Latimer opposed a phrase protecting Indian personal and tribal property rights but later withdrew his objections at the urging of the IRA. Kelly was instructed

32 Montezuma to Pratt, Feb. 6, 1922, Montezuma to Kelly, Feb. 6, 1922, ibid., 9:222.
33 Pratt to Montezuma, Mar. 3, 1922, PCM, UA 1:4.
34 CR, 67:2, Feb. 16, 1922, 2663.
38 Latimer to Kelly, Oct. 31, 1922, PCM.
to develop proper phrasing: "You probably have some form that will be best." 39 With a possibly Freudian pun, Latimer proudly reported to Pratt his progress: "Mr. Kelly's idea and mine is that we must have a citizenship bill without the slightest reservation." 40

During late 1922 and early 1923, Kelly continued to tangle with powerful House backers of the BIA, as he unsuccessfully point-of-ordered the bureau's 1923 appropriations bill. In that context, Kelly's annual blast at the bureau was launched in late December 1922.41 Kelly's associate Carlos Montezuma, meanwhile, had been scoring victories in Arizona actions designed to save the Fort McDowell Yavapai community from possible extinction threatened by the Salt River irrigation project. It was hardly coincidental that one of the most important businessmen in the Salt River Valley, Carl Hayden, owner of Hayden's Mills at Hayden's Ferry (Tempe), sought to impugn Kelly's criticism. Defending BIA reclamation work and the Salt River project, Hayden countered: "His [Kelly's] views are founded on what somebody else told him. He brings practically nothing but secondhand information. It is hearsay evidence that he has presented to the House." 42 Other than floor reactions such as Hayden's, Kelly's December 1922 speech did not receive the reviews and reprinting accorded earlier Kelly attacks on the BIA, even though the congressman again ordered distribution copies from the Government Printing Office. At the time his two key links to the Indian reform movement, Carlos Montezuma and Richard Henry Pratt, were seriously ill and both died in 1923. Without these figures, and with no one taking their places in Kelly's life, the Braddock congressman's Indian rights information and support network drifted into dissolution.

Undeterred by these adverse developments, Congressman Kelly devoted attention to Indian property questions — matters closely related to citizenship — during 1923. In February 1923, Kelly vigorously opposed a bill to appraise Indian property and award a pro rata dollar figure to "competent" Indians surrendering their titles — with "competency" to be determined by the Indian commissioner. Kelly questioned the wording of the proposal, pointing out that the distinguished Ojibwe scholar and publicist, William Madison, had been

40 Latimer to Pratt, Nov. 4, 1922, RHP, YB 6:161.
42 Ibid., 76:4, Dec. 27, 1922, 958-59.
unable to win a BIA "competency" designation. Arizona's Carl Hayden replied: "The gentleman from Pennsylvania delights in pointing out isolated instances of particular Indians who tell him that they have suffered some wrong." Kelly said: "I am simply asking that the weasel words be taken out and honest words inserted." 43 Kelly then pursued the question of how appraisers were to be appointed and paid. Indians would pay, but others would appoint the appraisers. Kelly, joined by House Indian Affairs Chairman Homer Snyder, proposed an amendment to eliminate that injustice; it was rejected. 44

Perhaps hoping to prevent future congressional or BIA attempts to tamper with Indian property, Representative Kelly introduced a bill in December 1923 to require approval of all proposed Indian legislation by concerned tribal councils. Kelly's bill died in the House Indian affairs committee. 45

When the BIA appropriations bill came up in January 1924, Kelly again delivered a major address on Indian policy reform. It was a massively documented tour de force, frequently interrupted by members, especially Homer Snyder and Carl Hayden. 46 Although reprinted by the Government Printing Office, this speech, like the one of December 1922, did not seem to draw much attention outside the House. Its significance, rather, derived from the floor opposition it elicited. It prompted Carl Hayden to give voice to what was probably a common apprehension among westerners about Indian citizenship and abolition of the bureau's reservation system. It was Hayden's contention that, in the wake of these reform measures, unscrupulous people descending upon the Indians would produce mass pauperism to be alleviated only at great cost to state treasuries. If not with total accuracy, Hayden at least put it with characteristic bluntness: "The gentleman comes from the great State of Pennsylvania, where there are no Indians. It is nothing to him, therefore, if all of the Indians in the United States are ruined, for they will not fall as paupers upon the bounty of his State. I live in a State where there are more full-blood Indians than in any other in the Union." 47 In view of the latter point, it is small wonder Hayden was fearful of Indian citizenship. If tribal common property were divided among members upon taking citizenship, there would be a sharply reduced need for the services of the BIA. With Arizona having the largest BIA civil list of all the states,

44 Ibid.
46 Ibid., Jan. 11, 1924, 841-59.
47 Ibid., 854.
the property question was doubtless as closely tied to Indian citizenship in the mind of Carl Hayden as BIA employees possibly were to his political fortunes. In these respects, Kelly was indeed free of any pressure where Indian citizenship and abolition of the BIA were concerned — it was a relatively safe issue for him.

Three Indian citizenship bills were introduced in early 1924; the version sponsored by Homer Snyder became law with minor amendments. While a long-standing advocate of citizenship for all native Americans, Congressman Kelly never sponsored a citizenship bill nor did he speak on behalf of any specific measure. Taken to task for this seeming neglect by a hostile House colleague in January 1924, Kelly exclaimed: “but a citizenship bill has been introduced. I made sure of that, and I propose to do what I can as a Member of Congress to remedy this situation. I do not personally have to introduce all such bills.”

The bill in question, signed by Calvin Coolidge on June 2, 1924, granted United States citizenship to all native Americans born within United States territory. Further, Indian tribal and personal property rights would not be affected by citizenship. It was a law in keeping with Kelly’s Indian reform ideas. It provided the key to assimilation — unrestricted Indian citizenship without the fetters of “competency” certificates. And, when Kelly worked on Indian citizenship with Joseph Latimer and Matthew Sniffen in October 1922, he had accepted the property protection provision suggested by the Indian Rights Association. It is impossible to estimate the extent of Kelly’s influence on the wording of the 1924 Indian citizenship law, but it is safe to say that while it was consistent with his views, Kelly was by then such a fallen angel in the eyes of the Congressional Indian experts that his counsel was probably not extensively sought by them.

Also, by 1924, Kelly was increasingly involved in other questions, particularly postal and highway matters. His concern for native Americans continued, but was less evident than it was in the early 1920s. Kelly’s contacts with Idaho Senator William E. Borah and the Northern California Indian Defense League’s John Collier, later Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Indian New Deal” commissioner, indicate that he was at least dabbling in problems concerning specific BIA employees and issues related to particular reservations.

48 Ibid., 851.
an outgrowth of his correspondence with John Collier, the Braddock representative testified in January 1928 before a Senate committee considering a resolution calling for a major review of United States Indian policy. Kelly, in favoring this massive study, contributed to the Indian policy reforms of the New Deal. Albeit an indirect influence, Kelly would have been pleased with those aspects of the program that helped native Americans to flex their citizenship powers.

Why would a Western Pennsylvania steel-town congressman devote so much energy to native American rights? The question can be approached obliquely at best: M. Clyde Kelly's personal papers, if extant, elude researchers. Kelly declined major opportunities to grandstand as a humanitarian. Although a newspaper publisher and writer of weekly columns, he made no mention of Indian causes and his support of them. The only constituents in his district who might possibly have had an interest in Indian policy would have been those needing natural resources such as iron ore, limestone, coal, oil, or timber from tribal lands. Kelly, however, steadfastly sought to protect native American land and water rights, even at the risk of perpetuating the Indian bureau. Moreover, Kelly favored enhancing the role of tribal councils — hardly a policy conducive to reservation resource use by Western Pennsylvania industrialists. Obviously, a concern for party regularity would not have motivated Kelly. What, then?

Carl Hayden and Oklahoma's Cherokee representative, Charles D. Carter, may have prompted Kelly to disclose his motives for defending the Indians. In testy debate verging on acrimony during the BIA appropriations review on January 11, 1924, Kelly was under heavy assault. Responding to a snappy question put by Carter, Kelly replied that his service on the Indian affairs committee "was the beginning of my interest in the question." Kelly continued: "I have not a reservation in my district or a job holder in this bureau from my district, and I can at least approach the question without pressure if I have not first-hand knowledge of the reservations." Picking up on a favorite point, Carl Hayden demanded: "I should like to ask the gentleman from Pennsylvania how many Indian reservations he has ever visited?" Kelly: "That is the same question that the gentleman
put to me a year ago. I told him then I had visited two reservations and one Indian school, and I also told the gentleman that I have not an employee from my district in the Indian Bureau.” Kelly further explained that his two years' service on the House Indian affairs committee “made such an impression on me that I determined that as long as I stayed in Congress the Indian Bureau bill is not going through without some expression on my part, weak as it may be, against this bureaucracy.” If Kelly fought the Indian bureau system because it was simply, in his mind, the right thing to do, this explanation would coincide with contemporary assessments of his behavior. One claimed that “into many a stone wall of political opposition he has gone without protection, without money, and risking everything he had on the issue.” Another wrote that “Clyde’s success was purely of his own making. He was a thoughtful, prodigiously hard-working man with a gift for friend-making.” Maybe our era of behaviorism, cynicism, and determinism will not permit accepting a decent human being without searching for “needs” and “hidden agendas.” In Kelly’s case, perhaps Thomas G. Bishop, the Yakima officer of the Society of American Indians who identified the Braddock congressman as an ally in 1919, was correct when he recommended M. Clyde Kelly simply as “our FRIEND.”

52 CR 68:1, Jan. 11, 1924, 851, 854.
53 Percy F. Smith, Memory’s Milestones: Seventy Years of a Busy Life in Pittsburgh, 1848-1918 (Pittsburgh, 1918), 85.
54 Carlton G. Ketchum to John W. Lerner, Jr., Dec. 29, 1981, PCM.
IN COMMEMORATION
GIFT
IN MEMORY OF
MRS. CARLTON G. KETCHUM
FROM
MR. AND MRS. GEORGE R. CRAIG

IN COMMEMORATION
GIFTS
IN MEMORY OF
MRS. RICHARD D. EDWARDS
FROM
MR. AND MRS. RALPH H. DEMMLER
MR. AND MRS. TORRENCE M. HUNT, SR.

IN COMMEMORATION
GIFTS
IN MEMORY OF
VERNA HOFFMAN HAAS
FROM
KENNETH B. HAAS I
NOEL HAAS