

Letter from Edgar Harlan to H.O. Bernbrock, April 30, 1932

April 30th, 1932

Hon. H.O. Bernbrock,
Waterloo, Iowa

Dear Mr. Bernbrock:

A week ago, at the Tama reservation, I had a very intimate conference with Young Bear and some of the older men, who convinced me that some of the older and less fortunate of their people actually are in hunger; that while they are furnished free seeds for their gardens, none are furnished for fields nor for food; that in the case of at least one widow woman, with no support whatsoever, the actually daily necessities have brought hazard to her very life.

I shall go down there if I can during the week beginning May 2, and actually visit such of the members as these men name, and after sifting out the worse from the better, I would like awfully well to have you meet me, and go also to see what I have found. This chiefly because you are a substantial business man and fellow citizen of the state, whose word is good, and whose prejudices are less subject to criticism than mine.

One thing, for instance, that I do not yet see is that, since their lands are taxed for state and county purposes--I do not see why a poor Indian, the same as a poor white person, might not be admitted to county funds for temporary relief. This and similar questions I shall understand when I see you, after having visited the county attorney, county auditor and board of supervisors.

What I hope to do is to frame a set of facts, but keep away from opinion, and it is to support my selection of facts that I shall wish for your opinion of them.

What should be done with any facts is yet a question. Whether they should be submitted to popular attention through the newspapers, if it is as bad as I fear, or formally to the federal or state government, or merely pigeonholed and forgotten is a matter that your mind, I hope, may help me in deciding.

Now, what day, excepting Friday, after the 4th, could you come to Tama and meet me at the Central hotel, and what hour?

Sincerely yours,

ERH-G