

The United Tribes Educational Technical Center: Historical Perspective

Editors Note: This is the fifth series of articles on the history and projections of the United Tribes Educational Technical Center.

The Historical Significance of Fort Lincoln, ND

On the 15th of January, 1965, the Daily Tribune reported a meeting of the governor's advisory committee concerning the status and the future of the fort. A number of people testified that the state should take it over pointing out that the Game and Fish Department and the Highway Department were already using buildings. The superintendent of the North Dakota Highway Patrol wanted space there for a headquarters and training center. The Chamber of Commerce had a plan wherein part of the fort would be reserved for a national cemetery and the



tee announced that it recommended that a Job Corps Youth Training Center be established at Fort Lincoln.

becoming divided as the population polarized over the question of Blacks coming into the community. Governor William Guy of North Dakota came forth with a strong statement supporting the Job Corps Center in Bismarck. (Bismarck Daily Tribune, November 30, 1965.) Thus the governor, the ministers, and most of the press favored the Job Corps, and opposed the sort of mentality that was resisting it. On the other hand, an unspoken hostility toward the intrusion of Black youths from the South remained that would pollute the entire question. Petitions were cir-

mayor's letter it was stressed that it appeared that a large number of Negro youths would be sent to this center

would be reserved for a national cemetery and the North Dakota National Guard headquarters would be removed to Fort Lincoln and space would be provided for a vocational training school and an extension to Bismarck Junior College. Russel Reid, superintendent of the state historical society, stated, "there is no question about it, the fort has an historic value and if possible it should be saved.", But he admitted that the society lacked money to maintain such a large site. The Last to testify was Stanley P. Lapin explaining the Job Corps.

gram, which was part of the Economic Opportunity Act. This was a program for unemployed youth between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one and Lapin suggested that the facilities could be used in this capacity at no cost to the state. This would prove to be the wave, albeit a small one, of the future.

On January 13, 1965, the governor's advisory commit-

tee established at Fort Lincoln. In its statement it said that the grounds included 113 acres of land upon which 128 buildings were located and that some of the land and buildings could be used for other purposes. Fort Lincoln was to be abandoned in June of that year as a military installation. (Bismarck Daily Tribune, January 13, 1965.) The Bismarck Tribune in an editorial greeted the idea with a certain amount of joy and felt that it would be good for the state and local community. Yet, the city itself led by Mayor Evan E. Lips, wrote the federal government urging that "it is apparent that the general concensus of the people heard from is that our citizens do not wish this facility located near Bismarck and felt it would not be successful." (Mandan Pioneer, November 24, 1965.) He stated that the recreational facilities of the city were inadequate to handle the number of boys that were coming in. In the

number of Negro youths that would be sent to this center and the mayor, while denying any racism, stated that "we feel, therefore, that a location where the Negro boys could have social relations with Negro families and girls would be more advantageous to them." (Mandan Pioneer, November 24, 1965.) It is apparent that racism, somewhat disguised, had entered the situation and that the local reaction was strong. This continued although it was pointed out that the Job Corps, could mean a million-dollar operation which a prairie city could definitely use. A few people wrote letters to the editor in support of it and pointed out that if Negroes could not make it in a liberal city in the North what hope did anyone have. Churchmen in both Mandan and Bismarck attacked the mayor and the Park Board for their opposition to the Job Corps. (Mandan Pioneer, November 27, 1965.) It became increasingly apparent that the city was

that would pollute the entire question. Petitions were circulated seeking from 3,000 to 5,000 signatures to oppose the location of the Center. The men who circulated the petition stated that they didn't care "what color they are, they are not the kind of people we want in Bismarck." They pointed out that the city had no idea how well they would be screened and further suggested that the experience of Job Corps in other areas, particularly Farkio, Montana, indicated that such a facility would cause trouble. (Mandan Pioneer, December 11, 1965.) One man even suggested that the Job Corps might be part of a Communist plot. He stated, "what's the object of sending these Negroes around the United States? There must be a reason for it? They could be Communists." To which the Bismarck Tribune replied that, "Yeah, and they could be Republicans and Democrats, too." A group

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called the Farmer's Liberty League, far on the right, got into the act and opposed the Corps. They mailed a newspaper comparing Negroes with apes to 2,000 people in the area. As the Minot Daily News stated, "usually placid Bismarck shaken by the controversy on the Job Corps. Center." (Minot Daily News, December 2, 1965.)

The Job Corps. people themselves seemed relatively unconcerned and had great faith that their people would succeed in establishing themselves with the community when the time came. (Minot Daily News, December 3, 1965.) On December 11, 1965, Governor

William Guy signed a contract to establish the Job Corps. Center at Fort Lincoln. By this time, the community was polarized and to a lesser degree the same was true of the state. The Corps. was called the Lewis and Clark Job Corps. Conservation Center and the facility at Fort Lincoln would be the sixth in the country devoted to conservation work. The decision had been made and it was a courageous one. (Bismarck Tribune, December 11, 1965.) Work went steadily forward. An architect was hired as space utilization studies went ahead and preparations were made for the people to come in. They started the remodeling of the fort on the 15th of

March, 1966. Personnel were hired and Douglas Duncan was named as the director. He was young, eager, earnest, and determined to succeed.

The city, faced with a fait accompli, went to work to develop a plan to welcome the Job Corps. trainees who were expected to arrive in August of 1966. Training went ahead for the instructors and the men moved in as scheduled. The first twenty-two of them arrived from Atlanta, Georgia, on August 20, 1966. (Bismarck Daily Tribune, August 2, 1966.) Their arrival was quiet and no trouble was reported. More and more continued to arrive. Within a month, 310 men were there. There was always minor trou-

ble and a certain amount of hostility toward the Center. It went along as best it could, however, until it was announced that the Lewis and Clark Job Corps. Center would be one of sixteen closed on June 30, 1968. Apparently the reason for the closing was the general dissatisfaction nationally with the Job Corps. combined with criticism that the Lewis and Clark Center had been too expensive as \$650,000 was spent to remodel the fort and over a million dollars a year to finance the operation. Again the question came up, "What would happen to Fort Lincoln?"

Watch for UTETC History Part Six in the upcoming issue of United Tribes News.