

The Trail of Broken Treaties

Student's Name

Institution of Learning

The Trail of Broken Treaties

The Trail of Broken Treaties, also known as the Trail of Broken Treaties Caravan, was a cross-country caravan in 1972 on the territory of the United States aimed to bring national attention to American Indian issues. More precisely, the vast majority of the problems were related to human rights, living rights, the inadequate quality of housing, and treaty rights. One of the most crucial events was that the Trail of Broken Treaties became the largest ever gathering of Native Americans presenting their objectives and plans for change. The historical background of the relations between the American Indians and the government relies upon a series of signed treaties aimed to enhance the living standards and socioeconomic opportunities of native populations.

However, a brief assessment of previous agreements reveals that most of them were severely neglected and ignored by official governmental bodies, meaning that the Trail of Broken Treaties represents the loss of hope of American Indian populations. Having gathered the efforts and forces of eight American Indian organizations to manage further negotiations with the Nixon Administration, the initial objectives, unfortunately, did not achieve their purpose. Consequently, the Trail of Broken Treaties signaled American Indian determination to persist in the discourse of public indifference and governmental hostility. In light of this, this essay analyzes the initial objectives, media coverage, and broader extent of human rights of the Trail of Broken Treaties.

Initial Objectives of the Protest

As it was partially mentioned above, American Indian frustration was intensifying gradually, eventually leading to the Twenty-Point Position paper, which was a recollection of the

positions designed to assert the sovereignty of native populations. As for the form and the scope of the protest movement, American Indian organizations decided that traveling by car, bus, and van to Washington, D.C. was the most feasible option to attract public attention and media coverage (Sanchez & Stuckey, 2000, p. 123). A group of caravans passed through reservation communities to gather enough support to initiate negotiations with the Nixon Administration.

Reviewing the specifications of the Twenty-Point Position paper, one may point out the commonalities in terms of asserting control over Indian affairs by joint commissions. Other than that, most of the demands were related to the recognition of the sovereign status of indigenous nations, the reestablishment of treaty relations, and raising American Indians' voice in the design of public policies concerning native populations of the US (Sanchez & Stuckey, 2000, p. 123). With regards to the legal nuances of the twenty positions, a close review unveils that the primary demand of the American Indians was to ensure the more considerable extent of autonomy in issuing public policies. Justifiably, the Trail of Broken Treaties was a sign of an ambitious protest movement, which could potentially reconfigure the essence of the relations between native populations and the official governmental agenda.

When the protesters reached Washington, D.C, they decided to occupy the Department of Interior headquarters building, where the Bureau of Indian Affairs was located, which was genuinely a protest sign against the previous violations of treaty rights. As part of the negotiation process, the spokespeople of the federal government voiced specific solutions, which primarily emphasized compliance with the Twenty Point Position (Sanchez & Stuckey, 2000, p. 127). Unfortunately, further negotiations resulted in the inability to agree on the ways through which the Twenty Point Position could be implemented in the existing legislative terms. Therefore,

under no circumstances should the ignorance and hostility of the Nixon Administration be disregarded in the review of the Trail of Broken Treaties.

Media Coverage

One of the tensest elements of the Trail of Broken Treaties was not only the obvious resistance from the federal government but also a common tendency to disregard the accomplishments of the American Indians in the press. The subsequent six-day occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs was covered variously by the press, whereas the most noticeable discrepancies could be found in the review of television and newspaper coverage (Heppler, 2009, p. 7). On the one hand, national television focused on the sort of changes which were demanded by American Indian activists. On the other hand, newspapers were more concerned about the responses from the government, especially considering the reactions towards the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Therefore, the mere existence of such a division in the media coverage represents the fluctuations of public opinions concerning the matter of American Indian human rights and subsequent treaty rights. What stands out in the discourse of the Trail of Broken Treaties is that the leaders of the movement adopted a confrontational approach to undermine the position of authority (Heppler, 2009, p. 7). Therefore, the media responded to the confrontational approach in a unique manner, which insisted on portraying the occupation as a spectacle rather than a political message. By taking the Trail of Broken Treaties non-seriously, the media played an enormous role in ignoring the message of the protest. Other than that, the Trail of Broken Treaties was the first large-scale and sustained demonstration aimed to propel national headlines with notions closely tied to the initial objectives of the protest movement (Heppler, 2009, p. 9).

With regards to the specifications of the media coverage, it is noticeable that the lack of attention from both media sources and contemporary historians was a supplemental factor for the failure of potential negotiations.

Human Rights: Implications for Further Negotiations

Since the manifestation of the Twenty-Point Position paper was presumably the most potent activist movement of the American Indians, the aspect of human rights stands out in the discourse of the Trail of Broken Treaties. More precisely, conventional historiography often depicts the caravan movement as a peaceful event, which resulted in the increased awareness of treaty rights of native populations. However, a primary source regarding the Trail of Broken Treaties by Vine reveals that the discourse on the caravan also included a violent encounter between whites and Indians (Deloria, 1985, p. 45). Subsequently, the media coverage had not posted any updates regarding the Indian-killing incident, whereas the American Indian activists raised enough public resonance to shed light on the Trail of Broken Treaties. What is more, the government interpreted the Trail of Broken Treaties primarily as an urban movement; however, the members of the caravan comprised individuals from various tribes, age groups, political persuasions, and ideological notions (Deloria, 1985, p. 47). Therefore, the merger of brutal atrocities, intentional reconfiguration of media coverage, and the neglect of the Twenty-Point Position paper were the implications of the Trail of Broken Treaties.

Even from the perspective of the government, the decision to implement such a severe neglect of human rights was inadequate, especially reviewing the scope of the cross-country protest movement. Also, it should be noted that the points of treaties were exceptionally accurate in terms of being close to Indian feelings and real problems, which were widespread across the

United States (Deloria, 1985, p. 53). Even after the failure to negotiate with the Nixon Administration, the aftermath of the Twenty-Point Position paper, coupled with the Trail of Broken Treaties as a whole, was a remarkable accomplishment of the American Indians, which further built a framework for the negotiation process.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the specifications of the Trail of Broken Treaties, one may point out that the elements of the initial demand, the detrimental impact of the media coverage, and the emergence of the negotiation framework in the long-term perspective, were the most vital aspects of the protest movement. Since the resistance from the federal government, media sources, and the hostility of the American public were too strong, it would be dubious to suggest that the Trail of Broken Treaties could have potentially achieved more. Having occupied the building of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the American Indians consolidated their forces into a single expression of how treaties are to be designed. Therefore, the incorporation of numerous American Indian organizations was the determinant that enabled the large-scale cross-country human rights campaign. Judging from the responses of the federal government, human rights defendants should review this issue more precisely to measure the extent of the Nixon Administration's violations in the field of human rights. Consequently, under no circumstances should the above powers be disregarded in the assessment of the ways through which the government is capable of violating the human rights of entire ethnicities.

References

- Deloria, V. (1985). *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties*. University of Texas Press.
- Heppler, J. (2009). Framing Red Power: The American Indian Movement, the Trail of Broken Treaties, and the Politics of Media. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=historydiss>
- Sanchez, J., & Stuckey, M. (2000). The rhetoric of American Indian activism in the 1960s and 1970s. *Communication Quarterly*, 48(2), 120-136. doi: 10.1080/01463370009385586

Academic Experts

Your paper can be even better than this one.
Get help from real experts in academic writing.

**REQUEST
HELP**

**GET A FREE
QUOTE**