

Self-rule Returned in 1934

The most dismal and oppressive period of American government policy toward the Indians of this country occurred from 1885 to 1934. Under the New Deal administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934 restored the authority of Indians to govern themselves through the creation of democratically elected tribal governments while continuing to have their lands held in trust.

In the 1950s tribal sovereignty was again threatened by a policy by which Congress tried to terminate the trust status of Indian lands and dissolve its other obligations to the Indians. Without a viable economic base and a well-functioning infrastructure, this spelled disaster for the perpetuation of many Indian communities who were the most vulnerable sector of the American population by most measures.

The tribe's escape from poverty was due to employment of many families through a lease with the Mt. Whitney Lumber Company in 1957. The lease provided jobs logging and the mill. Sixty-seven percent of the tribe's income came from this single source until the lease ended in spring of 1973.

The tribal economy was not as bad as at other reservations in that period. But as an index of its lack of wealth, it should be remembered that some households still did not have running water or electricity and perhaps a third still used outhouses.