

SHOE

by Jeff MacNelly



Jeopardy

Alabama-Coushattas facing bankruptcy

Associated Press

LIVINGSTON — Alabama-Coushatta Indians living on a 4,600-acre reservation near this Polk County community say they are on the verge of bankruptcy now that the state has dropped its guardianship of their tribe.

Another Texas tribe, the Tiguas, says it may soon be headed in the same direction.

Both tribes have been under the auspices of the state since 1954, when the federal government relinquished its protection of about a dozen tribes across the country.

But Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox recently ruled the trust relationship is improper and that the reservation should be treated no differently from "an Elk lodge."

Alabama-Coushatta Chief Fulton Battise, 76, says the new policy leaves his 130-year-old tribe in jeopardy.

"If it's going to happen, it's going to happen," he said.

The Alabama-Coushattas have filed a federal lawsuit over Mattox's policy, and the case is pending in U.S. District Court in Austin.

Mattox said the reservation should not be treated as a "benefi-

ciary of the gratuitous trust relationship with the state." Such treatment, the attorney general said, would violate the state's 1972 equal rights amendment, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of national origin.

Since September, the Alabama-Coushatta tribe has been forced to pay tax royalties from oil and gas production on the reservation and could soon face taxes on other properties.

The tribe already has lost \$148,000 in state funding and \$100,800 in mineral royalty taxes from which it was previously exempt. And the tourist trade, which once poured substantial funds into the tribe's coffers — has fallen into a slump, resulting in a \$260,000 loss.

Now, the tribe is nearly broke.

"I'm frustrated as hell," said Russell DaMetz, the tribe's finance officer, and one of only two non-Indian staff members. "Something has got to happen quick."

DaMetz said the tribe has enough money to remain solvent until next June and predicted it will be short \$2.3 million by August.

Members of the Tigua tribe, who live on a reservation near El Paso, fear they will meet a similar fate.

Tourism and pottery sales kept both the Tiguas and the Alabama-Coushattas self-sufficient until the industry dipped two years ago.

The state has been giving the tribes up to \$260,000 a year to pay for state employees, many of them Indians, to oversee reservation operations.

But the fund cutoff may mean the tribes could one day lose their land.

"The land is our base, our home. If not for the reservation, where would we be?" asked Carol Battise, 34, a bookkeeper who grew up on the Tigua reservation. "If you met me on the sidewalks of Houston, you would probably think I was a Mexican-American because of my dark skin. But here I have an identity. Don't destroy our tribe and separate our people."

"Think what it would be like if one day you read in the newspaper that the city of Houston had been dissolved — it no longer exists," said Raymond Apodaca, a Tigua and executive director of the Texas Indian Commission.

'President needs power to limit spending'

(continued from page 1)

should be and came in the post-Watergate sentiment toward limiting the chief executive's power.

"The only thing that went wrong was that Congress didn't get control of itself," Bush said. "And Congress found a whole series of procedural tricks to get around the self-restraints built into the act."

Bush said Congress' ability to create a "crazy-quilt" of spending bills tacked on to unrelated budget items

hindered the president's ability to excise special interest spending from the budget.

"The result is that all of the parochial impulses of Congress have been let loose to run wild," Bush said.

Some form of the Gramm-Rudman amendment, which would require Congress to meet deficit reduction targets leading to a balanced budget in the next six years, combined with a line-item veto allowing the president to cut special interest

spending from otherwise vital spending bills, would allow the president to say "enough is enough" by determining the ultimate limits of federal spending, Bush said.

In addition, a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget would seal the deal, he said.

"Let me repeat this, I am not seeking — nor is the president seeking — to diminish Congress' proper role," Bush said. "We want to restore a balance in the system, not upset the balance."



EMILIO ESTEVEZ

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Mark never knew what hit him.

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