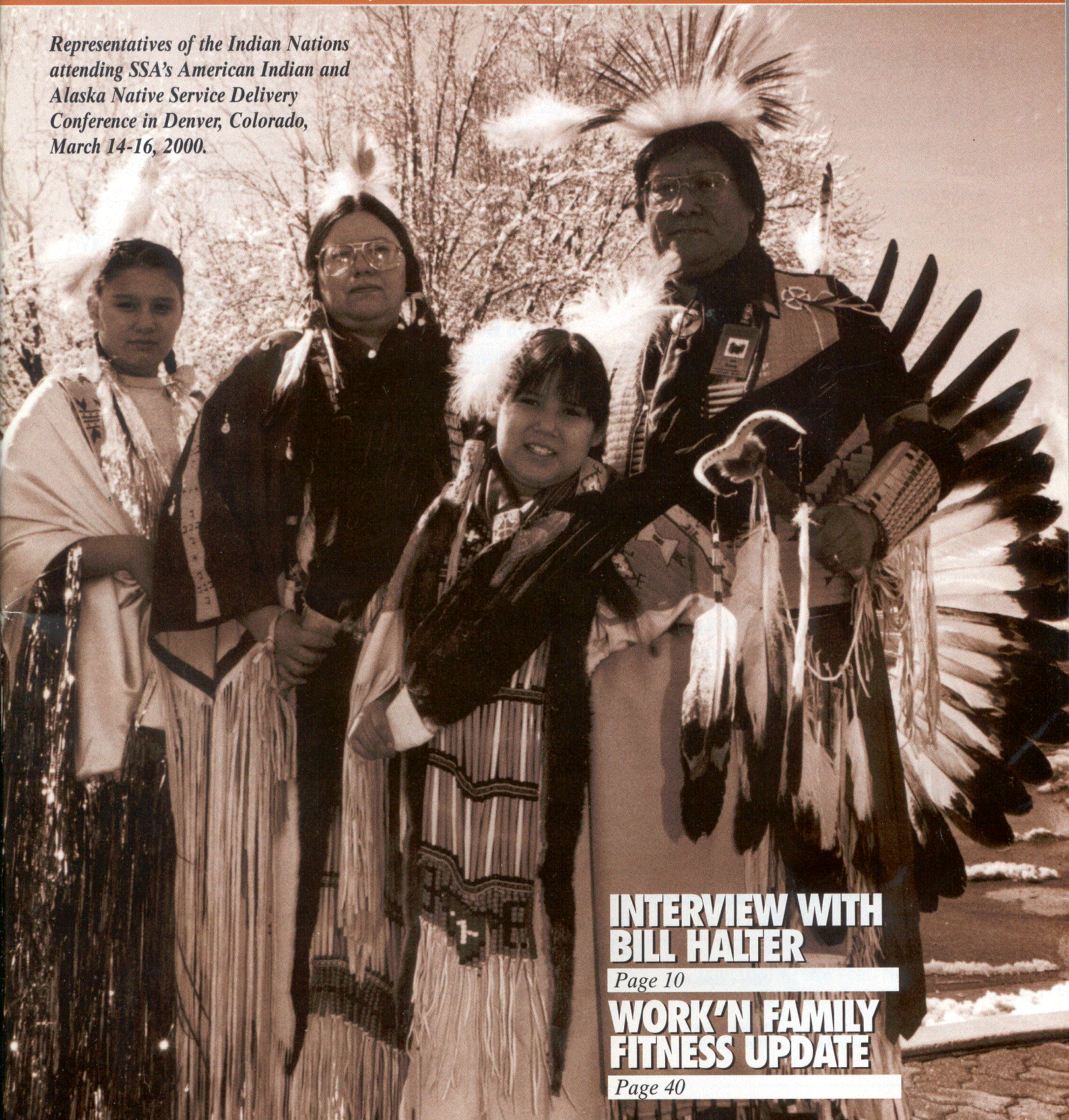


O A S I S

Social Security Administration Spring 2000

*Representatives of the Indian Nations
attending SSA's American Indian and
Alaska Native Service Delivery
Conference in Denver, Colorado,
March 14-16, 2000.*



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BILL HALTER**

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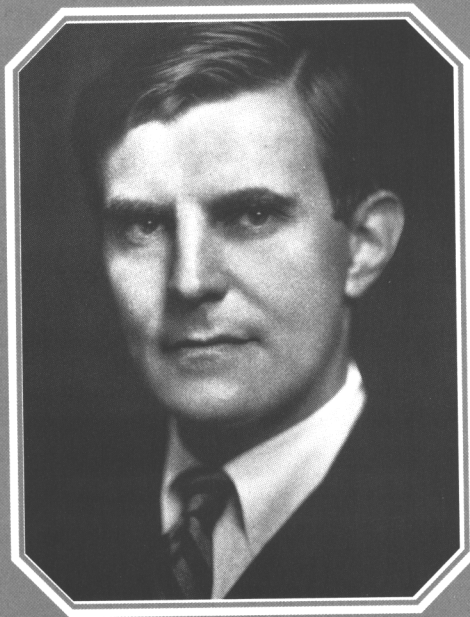
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Meet The Chairman of the Board

Does the name John Gilbert Winant sound familiar? If not, you may be surprised to learn that he was very important in the founding of our agency. As we prepare to celebrate the 65th anniversary of the Social Security Act, SSA Historian Larry DeWitt profiles one of the agency's early, and largely unknown, pioneers.

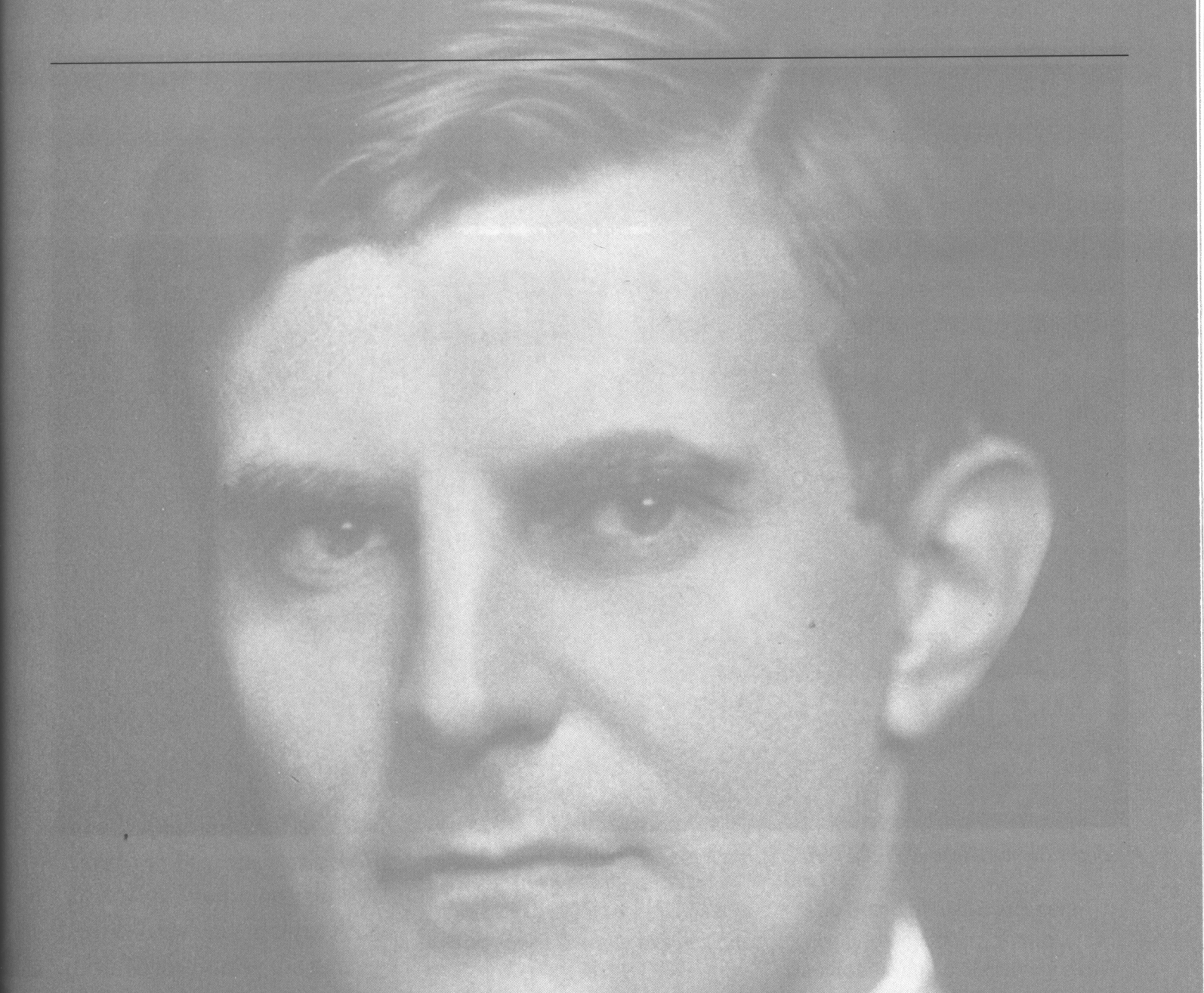
When President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked John "Gil" Winant to become the first head of the new Social Security Board (SSB) in 1935, Winant had already distinguished himself in public life as a three-term governor of New Hampshire and first American member of the International Labor Organization. He also served as the U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain during World War II. Winant served two terms as



Chairman of the SSB, the first from August 1935 until September 1936, and the second from November 1936 until February 1937. This was the crucial founding period of the Social Security program. As the first head of the SSB, Winant was instrumental in the early work of creating the organization that would carry out the new Social Security Act.

Winant's formal involvement with Social Security started in late 1934, when he was appointed to the Advisory Council of the Committee on Economic Security (CES), a cabinet-level group chartered by President Roosevelt to study problems relating to the economic security of individuals and to draft the Administration's legislative proposal. Other important Social Security figures, such as Arthur Altmeyer, Wilbur Cohen and Frances Perkins, were also part of the CES. Through the CES, Winant had a connection to the Social Security program from its earliest beginnings.

The Social Security Act created a three-person Board to administer the new law. It required that the Board be bipartisan, with no more than two members being from the same political party. Joining Gil on



the SSB were Vincent Miles and Arthur Altmeyer. Frank Bane was selected as the Executive Director and Henry Seidemann as Coordinator.

In practical terms, all of the important work of setting up the new organization took place in that first year-and-a-half when Gil was SSB Chairman. A system of 12 regional offices was created and their directors appointed. Seventy-seven field offices were opened by January 1937. The recordkeeping systems were devised and put in place in Baltimore's Candler

Building, and a massive enumeration effort was designed and successfully carried out, with over 23 million SSNs established. Payroll tax withholding started on schedule on January 1, 1937. State plans for the non-title II programs were reviewed and approved. The first batch of claims for title II old-age benefits had been received and adjudicated and more than \$215 million had been disbursed under the Act's various provisions by the time Gil left the Board.

Much of the credit for these nuts-and-bolts accomplishments has

to go to Arthur Altmeyer and Frank Bane, who were the real administrators at the SSB. But as Chairman, Gil deserves credit for much of the tenor and direction of the early SSB and for the wisdom and sound judgment of supporting them in their efforts.

(Editor's Note: If you want to learn more about the career of John Winant, see SSA's Internet History Page: mwww.ba.ssa.gov/history/winant-pro.html)
