



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

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ADDRESS BY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR FRED A. SEATON AT ARROW, INCORPORATED, LUNCHEON, BLUE ROOM, SHOREHAM HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D.C., 12:30 P.M. EST., MARCH 31, 1960.

Arrow, Incorporated, has established a unique place for itself as an organization concerned with the welfare of American Indians.

Two and a half years ago the Department of the Interior was privileged to join hands with Arrow in sponsoring the first nationwide conference on Indian Youth. Since then we have worked together on various projects, such as this one in which we here participate, today.

This luncheon was arranged, as you all know, to help pay the expenses of these Indian young people taking part, for the first time, in a White House Conference on Children and Youth.

To Arrow as an organization, to Mrs. Robert Guggenheim, honorary Chairman for the luncheon, to Mrs. Glenn L. Emmons, Chairman for the luncheon, and to all the volunteers who have helped make this project such a conspicuous success--you all deserve the highest commendation.

To you 25 delegates present as representatives of your tribal groups--please accept my congratulations on having been chosen for this honor. I hope your stay in Washington is an enjoyable one for you. I am sure that your very presence will do much to spotlight public attention on the special needs and problems of the Indian segment of America's younger population.

Incidentally, I am reminded of an incident that recently happened to our Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Glenn L. Emmons. It took place when he was visiting one of the northern reservations.

During a visit in one of the Indian homes, a junior member of the family, a youngster of about Cub Scout age, was brought forward and introduced to the distinguished visitor from Washington. The Commissioner put a question to the lad which is more or less traditional with grown-ups under such circumstances.

"Sonny," he asked, "what do you want to be when you grow up?"

The boy looked down at the floor for a moment. Then he shyly peered up and answered in just one word.

"Smart," he said in reply.

You know, I have a feeling that none of us needs worry about that particular young man's future prospects.

It is my purpose today to outline for you what we are striving to accomplish in the broad field of Indian Affairs.

Toward that end, we should recall to mind that at the beginning of the last decade, the Indians living on reservations and other lands under Federal jurisdiction were unquestionably one of the most disadvantaged and neglected groups in our whole national population. Far too many of the youngsters were doomed to face manhood and womanhood without even a smattering of elementary education. Far too many families were mired down in poverty and disease, in ignorance and despair.

The reasons were as varied as they were many.

To see why, let us look back a bit.

Beginning in the latter part of the 19th century, the Indian population on reservations throughout the country steadily increased while the available land resources at best remained static. In many cases the land actually dwindled for one reason or another, including some for which America has cause to feel ashamed.

Along with this, during the first half of this century, in my opinion, there is an unfortunate tendency on the part of the Federal Government to regard all Indians as basically an agricultural people.

Federal policies and programs were all too often drawn up in a way which actually accentuated the dependence of the growing population on the narrowing land base. We now realize that little or nothing was done to encourage a broadening of social outlook or a healthy diversification in the means of making a living. Under those circumstances, it is not surprising that so many of the reservation communities became veritable islands of poverty and despair, and that they were largely cut off from the main currents of our 20th century progress.

One of the results of the inadequate and ill-conceived policies of the past, no matter how sincere their conceivors were, is that most American Indian reservations have become seriously overpopulated--overpopulated in the sense of measuring the population against the available land resources and the local opportunities for making an adequate living. It is a fact that there were approximately 230,000 Indians resident on reservations in 1940, while there are 275,000 today. Yet the land area involved in the reservations remains approximately the same. Obviously, something has to give, and just as obviously, our Indian policy cannot be static, if indeed, we were ever justified in having it so. What we must have is a policy which is imaginative, dynamic and productive of results.

Now, there is neither anything radical nor basically wrong, as most of you know, about a movement of Indian population away from the reservations. As a matter of record, for many years there has been a movement away from reservations as the population has built up and the social and economic pressures have gradually intensified. What was wrong was the fact that altogether too many of the Indian people have not been suitably equipped, either by education or training, for off-reservation life. Repeated instances of failure or frustration have caused many to feel they had no feasible alternative except to go on scratching out even the most meager kind of livelihood in the midst of familiar surroundings.

I am absolutely convinced that it is an important part of our job to see to it that every Indian is prepared to meet the challenge of living off the reservation, if he decides to leave. We are morally bound to provide for him a real freedom of choice by equipping him so he can move with confidence into our normal American stream of life if he wishes to do so.

Let me assure you that we have no thought whatever of trying to force Indian people off the reservations or even of subtly persuading them to move against their will. That would be cruel and inhumane, and foredoomed to failure. I will have no part of it. Nor will I be a party to insisting that he remain on the reservation.

Experience teaches us that a very large percentage of the younger people are voluntarily seeking to make their livelihood away from the reservations. Therefore, we must continue--as one of our primary goals in working with younger Indians--to provide them with an opportunity for a sound education. Education for every Indian child has been the keystone of our policies. It must be so in the future.

As recently as 1953, only 79 percent of the Indian children between the ages of 6 and 18 were enrolled in school. Approximately 20,000 Indian youngsters were therefore in danger of going through life as illiterates. About two-thirds of these were on the Navajo Reservation. It was a desperately urgent problem and it called for quick and effective action.

The Department of the Interior, with the backing of the President and with bipartisan support in the Congress, took such action. Each year there has been steady improvement, and by next fall we confidently expect to meet, for the first time in history, the educational needs of all school-age Indian children throughout the entire United States. The groundwork has been laid for the most fully educated adult Indian population a generation from now that this Nation has ever known.

We have also emphasized the importance of providing the Indian children, wherever possible, and wherever desired by tribal groups, with a public school rather than a Federal school education. Our purpose in that respect has been to give these youngsters the advantages of mingling fully and freely with their non-Indian neighbors during their formative years, so that they will be better prepared for the contacts and the competitions that will inevitably come in later life.

You will be interested to know that whereas the enrollment of Indian children in our Federal schools has increased by only eight percent since 1953, enrollment of Indian children in public schools has jumped almost 50 percent. In the long run, this shifting of emphasis in the public school direction may well turn out to be as second in importance only to the gross increase of enrollment which has taken place over the past seven years.

For the first time we have taken active steps to repair the damages of past educational neglect among the adult Indian people.

Since 1955, an adult education program has grown to the place where it is being conducted at 80 locations on Indian reservations and in the native villages of Alaska. Altogether, some 3,000 adult Indians and native Alaskans are enrolled. Some of them, to be sure, are presently being taught only the rudiments of reading, writing and speaking the English language; others are learning how to manage more effectively their personal and household finances, and how to play a more significant role as participating citizens of American democracy. It is the sort of program which was long overdue in our administration of Indian affairs.

Much progress has also been made in the field of higher education for Indian youth. Today there are 29 tribal organizations which have funds for this purpose, and scholarships for Indian students are being furnished by State governments, by private organizations such as Arrow, by church groups, and by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in greater volume than ever before. As a result, the enrollment of Indian young people in colleges and other institutions of higher learning has almost doubled in the last five years. I am sure most of you youngsters being honored today are recipients of scholarships or grants from these various groups.

Beyond general education, the Bureau of Indian Affairs is engaged in other important activities to stimulate and encourage Indian advancement.

One of these is the conservation and development of the lands and other physical resources which the Federal Government holds in trust for the Indian people. Here our objective is twofold--protecting these basic assets against misuse and deterioration and providing the management to insure the best possible income for the Indian owners.

Here again, much has been accomplished with more remaining to be done. Evident to anyone are the improved roads that have been built to open up some of the more isolated sections of Indian country. Additional acres of Indian lands have been brought under irrigation. Up-to-date Indian forest management practices have made possible more extensive sales of Indian timber. The tremendous increases in both tribal and individual income which some of the more fortunate tribes have realized from leasing their lands for oil and gas, uranium, and real estate development have provided badly needed funds for a wide variety of proper tribal activities.

Yet, even after the resources on Indian reservations have been developed to the fullest practical extent, I do not believe we can realistically expect these resources alone to provide an adequate livelihood for all the families living on all the reservations. And even if we could, we must reckon, again, with the fact that only a comparatively small number of the younger Indian people have shown any interest in making a living directly from the land.

For this reason, we are engaged in several other important economic development programs.

The oldest of these, begun in 1952, is referred to as "voluntary relocation services." Under its terms, Indians who decide on their own initiative to move to some of the larger metropolitan centers are given aid and guidance in making the transition.

The second, which began in 1956, is a program of vocational training in trade schools and on-the-job training in industrial plants. The obvious purpose is to equip the adult Indian with an occupational skill so he can qualify for better-paying jobs and enjoy a fuller measure of security than he could otherwise possibly expect. This program is one which I believe holds much promise and should be accelerated as time goes on.

A third is designed to encourage industry to locate on or near Indian reservations. With this in mind, we are helping tribal organizations, and local groups such as chambers of commerce in the communities around the reservations, to work together in creating and publicizing an environment that will be more attractive to industry. One of the prime inducements the Federal Government itself can provide is to compensate industrial concerns for furnishing Indian workers with on-the-job training in their plants through the adult vocational training program. This, we are doing, again, with welcome bi-partisan support in the Congress.

All these varied activities are aimed at one overriding objective.

Simply stated, that objective is to provide our Indian citizens with adequate opportunities for personal development and growth so they can ultimately take whatever place they choose in the larger fabric of our national life. It is not to try

to mold Indian people into some abstract image of what we think they ought to be. Neither is it to terminate special Federal protection and services for any tribe or group of Indians until they themselves are ready, prepared, and willing to take on the full responsibilities for managing their own affairs.

Encouraging as our progress has been, I must warn that much more must be done before we can completely bridge the gap still separating so many Indian people from full participation in the benefits of modern America.

Although Indians who have left reservations have generally been welcomed in the 50 States as full-fledged citizens in the communities in which they settle, there are, unfortunately, some exceptions. It is my sincere hope that soon there will be no such exceptions. True enough, Indians must earn their place in life--just as non-Indians must. But when they have done that, it is not only contrary to the law of the land, but utterly reprehensible that they should be denied the rights of any American.

Just as there remain some human problems, there are also some complicated legal problems to resolve. For example, one of these arises because, under existing Federal law, tracts of land owned by some Indians can to all practical purpose, neither be leased nor sold. This is so because all owners must be located and all must agree to the lease or sale. Sometimes the individuals involved are so many and widely dispersed, that locating all is virtually impossible, or even if all are found, a small minority is able to block action.

The Department of the Interior has asked Congress to correct this situation by allowing such Indian lands to be leased or sold on the consent of the owners of half the interest in the land. We have also urged an increase of \$15 million for the Indian Revolving Loan Fund so as to allow tribes to work out sound purchase programs for keeping in Indian ownership areas considered important to the tribes. In addition, these monies would be used to continue our program of loans for small business. It is our hope that Congress will soon pass this needed legislation.

One final thought, Ladies and Gentlemen, about the sponsoring organization for this luncheon--Arrow, Incorporated. Just as the arrow is a device which through mankind's recorded history has signified an object which flies straight to the point, it seems to me to be peculiarly fitting, therefore, that the name "Arrow, Inc." has been adopted by this organization. Arrow, Inc., the Department of the Interior through its Bureau of Indian Affairs, and you as citizens interested in the welfare of our fellow citizens--the American Indians--have a common objective. Once more, I cheerfully acknowledge, the tremendous debt of gratitude which all of us owe to Arrow.

Now, please let me say this--in spite of many foreseeable problems, I am resolutely optimistic about the future outlook for the American Indian. Certain it is that there will be many more like Maria Tallchief in the arts, Allie Reynolds in sports, Dr. Ben Reifel in government, W. W. Keeler in business, others in law, teaching, and every other line of constructive endeavor. There will be many more such as the 25 fine, young delegates we honor here today---young men and women whose future prospects are great.

America has always been a land of opportunity, and with God's help we all mean to keep it so. Granted that, it remains for each of us to seize opportunity---not only to share in the material advantages of our free society, but in its challenges, its responsibilities, and in the many rich rewards it holds for the human spirit.

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