Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: March 10, 1966
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Acting Secretary of the Interior John A. Carver Jr. today announced the resignation of Philleo Nash as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, effective March 15, 1966.

Mr. Nash, a former lieutenant governor of Wisconsin, was nominated by President Kennedy as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in August 1961.

Prior to this appointment he served for five months as a member of the Indian Affairs Task Force named by Secretary Udall.

In addition to serving as lieutenant governor of Wisconsin from 1959 to 1961, Nash was a special assistant to President Truman from 1946 to 1953. For four years prior to his White House assignment, he was a special assistant to the Director of War Information, the late Elmer Davis.

As a student and lecturer in anthropology, Nash has had an active interest in Indian affairs throughout his career. Born in Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., in 1909, he was graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1932 and received a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Chicago five years later. From 1937 to 1941 he was a lecturer on anthropology at the University of Toronto.

Mr. Carver expressed appreciation for Nash's service to the Department and Indian people. "The last five years have been constructive ones, in education, in economic development, and in resource management," Carver said. "Mr. Nash has been a fine leader, and has enjoyed the confidence of the Indian people."

The text of Mr. Nash's letter of resignation to President Johnson and the President's response is attached.

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20242

March 9, 1966

Dear Mr. President:

Respectfully I submit my resignation as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. If it is agreeable with you, I would hope that it could be effective on March 15.

I do this most regretfully; my five years' association with the Indian tribes and their reservations have been filled with the happiest of relationships with the Indian people and their leaders.

Your administration has been one marked with understanding of the Indian people and responsive to their need. It has been mindful of its opportunities and its obligations. I have been proud to serve it.

In recent months, we have been fully committed in the War on Poverty, particularly the War on Indian Poverty. Much has been accomplished; much remains to be done.

Although I have become convinced that the success of programs for Indian betterment throughout the whole government will be better served with different leadership, I nevertheless remain committed to you and to the program, and pledge my support to both.

Respectfully yours,
(Sgd) Philleo Nash
Philleo Nash Commissioner

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

March 10, 1966

Dear Philleo:

With regret, I accept your resignation as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, effective March 15, 1966.

The task of an Indian Commissioner is arduous and demanding, the more so because Americans feel so deeply their responsibilities for old wrongs, and because of their willingness to help so often outstrips their understanding of what will be helpful.

During your incumbency, the Indian people have renewed their confidence in government. Many achievements have been recorded: public housing programs have been extended to the reservations, industrial development opportunities have been launched, public school construction has been advanced and the quality of Indian education has been upgraded.

You led an early attack in the War on Poverty before that war was formally declared. Your 'sensitive guidance of programs on Indian reservations furnished a valuable blueprint for the larger effort which followed.

The Indian people and your government colleagues will miss you and join me in thanking you for a job well done.

Sincerely yours,

Lyndon B. Johnson

Honorable Philleo Nash
Commissioner of Indian Affairs
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C