Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Under Secretary of the Interior James A. Joseph announced today the appointment of a task force to develop recommendations for the Secretary on the reorganization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"Secretary Andrus wants to insure that the trust responsibilities of the Federal Government are carried out effectively, that services to Native American people are provided efficiently and that tribal governments are strengthened," Joseph said.

"As part of a continuing effort to meet this objective a Task Force on the reorganization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs has been established to formulate and present recommendations to the Secretary for immediately improving the management, organization and practices of the Bureau."

Under Secretary Joseph said the study is to be comprehensive and the changes will be fundamental--not just cosmetic. He emphasized that the changes will be instituted in an orderly fashion to minimize any hardship on BIA employees and upon established relationships between the tribes and BIA offices.

The 11-member task force includes representatives of the National Congress of American Indians and the National Tribal Chairmen's Association; two representatives of the BIA named by Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Forrest Gerard; Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy, Budget and Administration Larry Meierotto; and six public members. The public members include Stewart L. Udall, former Secretary of the Interior.

Assistant Secretary Gerard is an ex-officio member. The task force director is Jack Rushing, a member of the Under Secretary's staff.

The task force will hold its first meeting on December 21, 1977. Subsequent meetings will be held at least twice a month. The task force will present its recommendations to Secretary Andrus at the beginning of April 1978.

Recommendations of the American Indian Policy Review Commission and other studies of the Bureau and its responsibilities will be considered. Among the areas for improving the performance of BIA which will be studied are: planning, advocacy, trust protection services, human resource development, natural resource development, social service delivery, personnel and administrative services, and consultation.

Members of the task force are: Robert J. Hampton, vice president, ATE Management, Arlington, Va.; Willie Hensley, executive vice president, NANA Regional Corp., Inc., Kotzebue, Ak..; Ted Marston, vice president, Cummins Engine Company, Columbus, In.; Larry Meierotto, acting assistant secretary policy, budget, and administration, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

Also Lorraine Misiaszek, acting director, Advocates for Indian Education, Spokane, Wa.; Jim Sansaver, reservation program office, Billings area office, Billings, Mt.; Dr. Thomas Sawyer, director, ARIES Consulting Corp., Provo, Ut.; Ronald Toya, reservation program office, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Southern Pueblo Agency, Albuquerque, N.M.

Also Ray Goetting, National Congress of American Indians, Washington, D.C.; Stewart L. Udall, of counsel, Duncan, Brown, Weinberg & Palmer, Washington, D.C.; William Youpee, executive director, National Tribal Chairmen's Association, Washington, D. C.

Secretary Andrus has also invited the Departments of Energy, Transportation Commerce, Labor, Health, Education and Welfare, .Justice and Agriculture to designate representatives to participate in Task Force meetings as observers because of the responsibilities of these Departments for administering certain Indian programs. The same invitation was extended by the Secretary to Rep. Teno Roncalio, chairman of the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs and Public Lands of the House Interior Committee and Senator. James Abourezk chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs.