National Congress of American Indians, Over Current BIA Goals

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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson, in a long afternoon meeting January 9 and all day January 10 in Washington, D.C. with elected executive boards of the two major national Indian organizations --the National Tribal Chairmen's Association and the National Congress of American Indians --solicited their views and recommendations on the organization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, recruitment techniques for staff positions, and budgeting goals and objectives of the 141 year-old Agency.

"I want Indian people, their tribal councils and organizations fully involved in decisions that will directly affect them. and I want to establish better communications between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the tribes and their members so that Indian groups this Agency serves can realize, fully, self-determination," Thompson began.

"American Indians have the right to expect an effective and efficient Bureau of Indian Affairs. They have the right to expect that the money appropriated by Congress for Indians is spent wisely, and that each dollar directly or indirectly benefits Indians at the local and individual level. Indian people have a right to determine what the Indian priorities will be, and how they are to be met."

Representatives of the two Indian groups also reviewed goals for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

A representative of the Assistant Secretary, Management, of the Department of the Interior and Thompson indicated that they wished the Indian leaders to comment on possible priorities and degree of, emphasis. The Departmental representative explained that the policy of the Department --to which Thompson reports --has a system of "management by objective." Manpower and dollars are paired, in order to set dates for accomplishments.

Attending were: National Tribal Chairmen's Association: Governor Robert Lewis, President (Zuni Pueblo); Bill Youpee, Executive Director (Fort Peck); Elmer M. Savilla, Vice President (Quechan); Kenneth Black, Secretary (Otoe-Missouri). National Congress of American Indians: Ernest Stevens, Vice President (Oneida); Charles Trimble, Executive Director (Oglala Sioux). Two Area Representatives of the National Tribal Chairmen's Association sat in on the January 10 sessions. They were Chairman Buffalo Tiger (Miccosukee) and Chairman Alvino Lucero (Isleta Pueblo).