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During a return visit to England King Charles I asked William Penn how he was going to gain possession of the Indian lands. Penn replied, "I will buy them."

"But how can you," asked the king, "When you have already bought them from me?"

Penn answered simply, "I bought them from you, but not because they were yours.... "

Today, almost two centuries later we are celebrating the extension of Penn's insight and belief that the land and heritage of the new world belonged to the Indians -- the first Americans.

It is as "first Americans" that we are commemorating the removal of the great and little Osage from Kansas to these great lands in the Oklahoma Territory.

It goes without saying that when the federal government made arrangements for the Osage Tribe to purchase almost a million and a half acres from the Cherokee Nation at a cost of seventy cents an acre -- the Osage got more than fair value. And that was before the consumer movement!

From the days when Father Marquette, the great Jesuit missionary first explored the Missouri River Valley, the Osage have exercised a great role in the development of this land and of our America.

Years afterwards, when Washington Irving toured the great pra1r1e lands of our growing nation he wrote, "They have fine Roman countenances, and broad deep chests: and, as they generally wore their blankets wrapped around their loins, so as to leave the bust and arms bare, they look like so many noble bronze figures. The Osages are the finest looking Indians I have ever seen in the 'West."

The Osage share a rich heritage as one of the leading tribes in -the mainstream of Indian history.

As early as 1725 a party of Osage were received by the King of France - and were among the first Indians to go abroad... from the New World to the Old.

The progress and vitality of the Osage is the result of the sensibility and strength, wisdom and pride that is at the very center of your tribal heritage. It is also the result of the great legacy of spirited and inspirational leadership that your chiefs and tribal chairmen have left you and the generation of Osage that will continue these traditions.

These great men like, Ne-kah-wah-she-tun-kah, James and Peter Bigheart, Paul Red Eagle, Fred Lookout, Paul Pitts and Chief Bacon Rind will be honored as long as the Osage are on this land.

In the last hundred years these lands have become as much a part of the Osage Tribe, and as vital to your heritage as your language and your traditions.

This land is beautiful, and it is bountiful and rich, and has done much to make the Osage Tribe one of the leading Indian nations', in the world. But more important than that, the Osages have growth with

this land, and you and your leaders have grown in stature, and wisdom and maturity during the last century -- because of your reverence for the integrity of the land.

This regard, this respect for the earth is something that not only other tribes -- but all Americans can learn from you.

There have been a lot of changes in the last hundred years.

The American Indian has struggled during the last century with the meaning of his identity, and the role of his tribe in American society.

Already this awakening has led the tribes of America into a new era of understanding, of prosperity, of hope.

The American Indian has awakened and is on the way to a new era.

America's Indians have learned that you cannot go back -- you can only look back.

The Osage can be proud to have been at the forefront of that era of prosperity and hope.

You and the members of your tribe have reason to be proud because your tribe as much as any in America is passing through a new threshold of self-determination.

In the last four years we in the federal government have done much to bring to reality President Nixon's commitment "to a new era in which the future of American Indians is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions."

Since 1969, for example, we have doubled BIA funding from $249 million to over $530 million, and have increased Indian funding from other federal agencies, like BUD, OEO, EDA, HEW, and Labor by nearly as much.

I have worked with Secretary Morton and Indian tribal leaders to bring out their funding priorities in consultation with us. I am proud to say that we have acted on those priorities.

We have made great strides in education. In the last two years alone, for example, we have increased funding for Indian education by almost $20 million. And today all 200 BIA schools have Indian advisory boards or education committees. We are also pursuing a vigorous scholarship program to help build the new Indian leaders of the future.

Today a majority of the top BIA executive positions at the Washington level are filled by Indians; and the number 6f Indians serving as BIA area directors has risen from lout of 11, to 7 out of a possible 12.

We are especially proud of our actions to restore 48,000 acres of the sacred Blue Lake area to the Taos Indians, as well as our, efforts to return lands to the Yakima Indians in Washington State.

The tribes of America are also making great strides in achieving economic independence. Our efforts through the Indian Business Development Fund are already bringing new prosperity to Indian lands, as well as assisting Indians to safeguard their own rights as well as develop them.

There is no question about it American Indians are entering a new era. We in government have learned

from you, and as President Nixon has said many times, the future of the first Americans cannot be entrusted to anyone other than themselves.

That is what he meant when he established a goal of Indian "self-determination." We will not cease until that goal is achieved.

I would like to conclude with a few words directed to the young Osage men and women here.

First of all I must admit to you that I envy you each. I envy you for two reasons. First because you are young, and second because you are Osage, and are heirs of a great and stirring legacy of a rich tribal culture and tradition.

I know that each of you are filled with the special excitement of youth. You are looking forward to creating new relationships, of learning new things, and making new achievements.

Many of you will be leaving Oklahoma -- perhaps to join the Armed Forces, or to go to school. Some of you may not return and will seek a new home elsewhere.

Some of you have learned the Osage language at the weekly classes at Pawhuska and many of you are keeping alive Osage tradition and culture and your ceremonial dances.

If I can leave you with one thought it is that you must always be proud of this heritage. No matter how intense the pressures are that you encounter, do not deny this great legacy -- your birthright as an Osage.

To those of you who are younger and who are still formulating your education goals for the future I urge you to commit yourself to keeping these traditions alive.

Much has happened in the last century. This is a great day for Oklahoma and for the Osage, and particularly for those remaining living original Osage allottees, whom we particularly honor today.

It is an even greater day for America. Thank you.