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Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel today announced sweeping personnel policy changes in the Bureau of Indian Affairs designed to give the Indian people more voice at the decision-making levels of government.

The new program calls for the creation of 63 n1w Field Administrator positions on reservations and granting these administrators full authority to assist local Indians in developing their economic and social opportunities.

The Field Administrators will have responsibilities surpassing those of the present 63 Agency Superintendents on the reservations, and the latter positions will be abolished, Secretary Hickel said.

In addition, Secretary Hickel said he has taken action to reassign 10 BIA Area Directors and to transfer authority held by them to the new field administrators.

"These changes are essential to achieve the objectives of President Nixon in placing the Indian people in closer contact with decision-makers and in broadening their opportunities to guide and improve their own affairs," the Secretary said.

"We are seeking to find people with the greatest skills to fill the field administrator posts," he added. "They are the men who will work directly with the Indians in developing their reservations through sound land-leasing, budgeting and staffing practices.

The area directors will serve in advisory capacities and retain most of their technical and general service functions," he explained.

Six Field Employment Assistant Directors also will be reassigned in the change.

Secretary Hickel said Commissioner of Indian Affairs Louis R. Bruce had informed Earl Old Person, President of the National **Congress** of American Indians, Chairman of the Northwest Affiliated Tribes, and Chairman of the Blackfeet Tribe of Indians, as well as other key Indian leaders throughout the country and gained their support before launching his new program. The new Indian members of the Commissioner's staff are also working closely with Indian leaders to implement these changes.

Commissioner Bruce said the new policy carries out an earlier pledge to turn BIA into a service rather than a management organization.

The move, according to Bruce, is designed to facilitate the transition of the old Bureau "Agency Superintendent into a modern Field Administrator. "I am giving the Field Administrators more horsepower--they are the people who are working directly with the Indian people every day," Bruce said.

"We have thrown out the old job descriptions and built completely new ones designed to assist Indian

people to take control over their own destinies, develop economic and social opportunities, as well as provide for better Federal protection of the trust status of Indian land."

Bruce stated that in addition to these administrative changes, the BIA is providing for negotiation at the highest level of contractual and training arrangements to assist tribes in taking over administration of BIA programs. This effort will be headed ·by Olympic gold medal inner Billy Mills, a Sioux Indian.

"We are after a complete overhaul," Bruce said, "One of my four executive task forces has just completed work on the new agency field evaluation plan. I have directed high level executive teams composed of Tribal Leaders, BIA, the National Council on Indian Opportunity (NCIO) in the Vice President's Office,

and other Federal representatives to go to the field and evaluate Indian programs.

''With these evaluations we will be able to determine accurately where our field people are really helping Indian people to make substantial gains and where they are falling short."