Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: January 9, 1970
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Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel announced today that he has approved an “executive realignment” of top positions in the Bureau of Indian affairs.

“These changes will help make the Bureau more responsive to the needs of the Indian people and will provide the necessary flexibility in developing and carrying out programs to meet those requirements.” Secretary Hickel said.

The realignment creates the positions of Associate Commissioner for Education and Programs and Associate Commissioner for Support Services. They replace the Deputy Commissioner and the six Assistant Commissioners. The two positions have, between them, line authority over all Bureau programs.

Assisting the two associate Commissioners will be five staff directors. The Offices of Education Programs, Community Services and Economic Development will be under the Associate Commissioner for Education and Programs and the office of Management Services and Operating Services under the Associate Commissioner for Support Services. The staff directors will not have line authority.

Secretary Hickel said that he and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Louis R. Bruce nave been consulting with tribal leaders in the selection of the personnel for these positions and that appointments will be announced as soon as possible.

The realignment expands the Bureaus Office of Congressional Relation to become the office of Congressional and Tribal Relations. It will assist tribes in presenting their legislative needs and keep them informed on Congressional matters.

An Office of Intergovernmental Relations is created within the Bureau to stimulate maximum participation of Indian and Alaska Native people in interagency and intergovernmental programs and to be a for Bureau cooperation with the National Council of Indian Opportunity in the Vice President's office.

In a letter to tribal leaders, Commissioner Bruce said the realignment “will permit me to obtain a group of individuals in top management positions who will generate new directions and flexibility of policy in Indian affairs. The new team will include established Indian leaders, many of whom have been recommended by the various tribes and Alaskan Native groups.

"With this new team, I hope to make the Bureau totally responsive to your needs. We shall actively seek your thoughts and ideas on how to bet organize so as to make it an Indian Bureau not only in name but in fact."