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Interior Secretary Cecil D. Andrus said today that the energy crisis presents Indian tribes with opportunities to break the cycle of dependence which has plagued their people for more than a century.

"For too long, too many Indian people have been -- through no fault of their own -- too dependent upon the Federal government," Andrus said in a speech before the National Congress of American Indians in Albuquerque, N.M. "The energy crisis offers an opportunity for many tribes to break that cycle of dependence which has plagued your people."

The Secretary praised the Indians for their efforts to accelerate energy development on reservations and to become active partners in energy-producing projects.

"You are seeking independence -- the type of independence that comes with employment opportunities on the tribal lands, from adequate housing, from improved health," Andrus said.

"By developing your resources wisely, you can attain the independence American Indians seek while helping all Americans attain the national energy independence goal."

The Secretary said that President Carter's program, including the Windfall Profits Tax, Energy Security Corporation, and the Energy Mobilization Board, were of vital importance to the tribes. He said that to be effective, the national program would have to include measures to help Indians develop the vast energy resources on Indian lands.

"This is not only equitable, it is essential to increased energy supply, Andrus said.

The Secretary reviewed efforts by the Department of the Interior to help tribes make informed decisions regarding energy development and to better manage all their natural resources.

"Decisions on the development of energy resources on tribal lands will be made in the final instance by tribal leaders," Andrus said, responding to concern expressed by Indian leaders that the proposed Energy Mobilization Board would override established rights of tribes to control their own natural resources.

"In the vast majority of cases, I believe that you can make decisions regarding resources development which will be not only in your own best interest, but in the best interest of the Nation," Andrus said.