Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Philleo Nash today told a group of 200 Bureau personnel and high-ranking officials of other Federal agencies that the Administration's projected war on poverty "may...stimulate us to review, appraise, and revise our own ideas" relative to Indian social and economic aid.

He addressed a conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, of all superintendents of Indian reservations, the second since 1938 and a sequel to one held in Denver, Colo., shortly after Nash became Commissioner in 1961.

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall opened the conference Tuesday, June 16, with an appraisal of the potential of the Economic Opportunity Act. Commissioner Nash's comments today summarized the three-day discussions, which focused on Indian needs in education, vocational training, housing, development of resources, and encouragement of business and industry.

"In less than three years' time, we have made real progress, particularly in the bedrock issues of Indian education and vocational training," the Commissioner said. "But," he continued, "The hard core of the Indians' prob1em-- unemployment--persists, the result of a combination of a growing population and a fixed base of economic resources"

The ultimate goals for the Indian people, the Commissioner emphasized, remain those stated in the 1961 report of the Secretary's Task Force on Indian Affairs. Nash was a member of that Task Force. The goals are: L Maximum economic self-sufficiency; 2. full participation in American life; 3. equal citizenship privileges and responsibilities.

Programs enlarged in the last three years are, he said, adult education, college scholarships, vocational training, industrial development, tourism and recreation development, and trades and crafts training.

New programs include provision of modern housing; employment of Indians on construction and other Government projects; improvement of real estate appraisal to insure fair market value for sale or lease of Indian lands; feasibility studies for economic development; and establishment of community centers to encourage civic activities among Indians., "In effect," the Commissioner said, "what we are doing is trying to pave the way for all Indians to enter the mainstream of American life, either on or off the reservations."

Nash’s speech is attached.