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The Bureau of Indian Affairs announced today the release of a new, updated booklet, "Answers to Your Questions about American Indians."

Earlier editions have been popular with persons interested in the American Indian. The questions answered are chosen from the many thousands directed to the Bureau during the past years.

According to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert L. Bennett, the answers to some of the questions will startle those with preconceived ideas about Indians and their status in this country.

"For example," said Bennett, "many people don't realize that Indians are citizens of the United States, have the same rights, and pay the same applicable taxes that everyone else does. They vote, serve their military obligation, and may drink liquor except, perhaps, in their own communities where the tribe has control of such things."

Other items: Indians do not have to live on reservations, although more than 300,000 out of a 552,000 total (1960 Census figures) do so. In fact, the Bureau has a continuing program of technical education and assimilation that includes voluntary movement of Indians to the big cities to work as qualified mechanics, secretaries, service men, laborers, and white collar workers.

There was never a written Indian language before the corning of the white man, and today there are possibly 100 different Indian tongues.

Since 1854, Bureau policy has given employment preference to persons of one-fourth or more Indian blood; more than half of the 16,000 Bureau of Indian Affairs employees are of Indian ancestry.

Another frequently asked question about Indians concerns the country's 290 Indian land areas under Federal jurisdiction. Only 25 states have federally related Indian reservations, most of them in the West. The booklet identifies reservations as land set aside for specific Indian use through treaties, Congressional acts, executive orders, and agreements.

Indian land has become big business, according to the publication. The tribes lease mineral rights, farming and ranching acres, conduct their own logging operations, and have set out to bring industrial firms to their areas, thereby getting employment for Indians and profiting from the lease arrangements involved.

There are over 50 million acres held in trust by the Department of the Interior for Indian use; 39 million of this is for the tribes and 11 million for individual Indians. An additional 5 million acres of Government-owned land is administered by the Bureau for Indian use.

Reservations range in size from California mini-acre rancherias to the vast Navajo Reservation of 14 million acres sprawling across northern Arizona into New Mexico and Utah.

To the question, "Can Indians live off the fruits of their lands?" the booklet gives a qualified answer. A

few Indian areas have enough resources to support their Indian residents, but most reservations are facing a rapidly growing population explosion, expanding at a rate equivalent to 2 to lover the non-Indian areas of the country.

Where there is income, the funds generally go into the tribal treasury for improvements that may include better housing, roads, education and law and order.

Bennett noted that another common misconception cleared up by the new publication is that Indians are not getting the same help that the urban poor receive.

"Actually," he said, "the War on Poverty is welcomed by most Indians and has been markedly successful. The Office of Economic Opportunity, for example, funded $32 million for Indian programs in fiscal 1967, with the greater amount going toward easing the problems of poor health, inadequate education, unemployment and substandard housing."

Head Start prepares the Indian child with important pre-school learning experiences (for many Indians, English is a second language and lack of knowledge of it prevents their moving ahead in English-speaking schools), as well as medical and dental attention and proper nutritional care.

Indian job programs, including a unique family program that involves the entire family as a unit, are becoming models for similar work with the urban poor. Under the plan, the father is taught a trade or skill, the youngsters go to school and receive specialized instruction if necessary, while the mother is prepared to take care of a modern home, evaluate prices, do the shopping.

"Answers to Your Questions" also deals with Indian schools and health services, Indian charity and interest groups; contains a bibliography on Indians, lists of publications dealing with Indians, and locations of famous Indian museums.

The booklet is available at 25¢ a copy from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, by sending a check or money order. A 25 percent discount is allowed on quantity orders of 100 or more if mailed to one address.