Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert L. Bennett has endorsed in principle the construction and operation of Indian-owned motels under franchise arrangements with interested regional or national motel groups, the Department of the Interior reported today.

In a letter to area industrial development officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and to reservation superintendents, Bennett pointed out that such arrangements could provide training for Indians in motel management and staffing, national advertising and public relations, standardized accounting and bookkeeping, architectural service, and discount purchasing of equipment and supplies.

The Commissioner's letter followed a meeting in Washington, D.C., earlier this month, at which H.H. Mobley, executive vice president of Quality Courts Motels, Inc. outlined the possibilities for successful establishment of Indian-owned and operated motels under a franchise system. Individual establishments would benefit by referrals from more than 500 other Quality Courts.

Mobley said such motels could be designed in keeping with traditional tribal architecture and decor, and staffed by Indian personnel in tribal costume. Each could feature a jewelry and arts store, selling Indian effects from the entire country, he said.

Tribes interested in further information on the program will inform the area directors and through them will be supplied by Quality Courts a detailed kit explaining the plan, Bennett said. Representatives of the Quality group will then investigate those sites which appear to have good development potential. Meetings would be held with tribal members to discuss mutual interests in proceeding with a development program.

Bennett again underscored the point that the Bureau is acting only as intermediary in the negotiations and that the acceptance of the plan is up to individual tribes.

"The Indians, themselves," he said, "must take the lead in expanding the potential of their reservations."