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Members of a Task Force appointed in December 1977 to prepare recommendations on the restructuring of the Bureau of Indian Affairs presented their final report to Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus today.

The report will be published in the Federal Register and distributed to Indian tribes and organizations for connect through June 30, 1978.

After analysis of the report and consideration of the comments, Secretary Andrus will make specific decisions early in August on the management and organizational structure of the bureau, together with a schedule for carrying out the changes.

A preliminary report of the Task Force was presented to Under Secretary of the Interior James A. Joseph on March 31.

"While I have not had an opportunity to study the report in detail and have reached no conclusions on any of its specific recommendations, I share the basic conclusion of the Task Force that the organization and operation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs needs to be improved," Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus said today.

"One of my primary aims as Secretary of the Interior is to carry out a fair and vigorous program for the benefit of our American Indian citizens. This requires that we provide a firm basis for Indian self-determination, that tribal governments are strengthened, that the trust responsibilities of the Federal Government are conducted effectively, and that services to the Indian people are provided efficiently.

"While changes will be instituted in an orderly fashion and every effort will be made to minimize any hardship on BIA employees and upon established relationships between the tribes and BIA officials, I am committed to the principle that basic improvement in the Bureau is necessary if we are to help meet the many challenges faced today by the American Indian people."

The preface to the Task Force report states that the group focused on what it viewed as the major organizational issues and problems.

The recommendations in the 130 page report include the following:

--The top level organization should consist of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs with three principal Deputies--for planning and evaluation, for operations (Commissioner), and for budget and finance (Comptroller).

--To reflect the high level of commitment to self-determination on the part of the Bureau, program and policy implementation for P.L. 93-638, the Self-Determination Act, should be placed under the Deputy Assistant Secretary --Planning and Evaluation.

--Consideration should be given to the location of field offices, there should be a review of each Area

Office on a case-by-case basis to consider the need to retain or combine these offices.

--Top management should have the option of utilizing "Schedule C" appointments to fill Area Director Positions.

Among the areas studied for improving the BIA were: planning, advocacy, trust protection services, human resource development, natural resource development, social service delivery, personnel and administrative services, and consultation.

In addition to twice monthly meetings in Washington, D.C., the Task Force also held field hearings in Phoenix, Arizona; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Denver, Colorado; Portland, Oregon; and Duluth, Minnesota.

The 11-member Task Force included representatives of the National Congress of American Indians and the National Tribal Chairmen's Association; two representatives of the BIA named by Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Forrest Gerard; a representative of Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy, Budget and Administration Larry Meierotto; and six public members. The public members included Stewart L. Udall, former Secretary of the Interior.

Members of Task Force were: Robert D. Hampton, vice president, ATE Management, Arlington, Va.; Willie Hensley, executive vice president, NANA Regional Corp., Inc., Kotzebue, Ak.; Ted Marston, vice president, Cummins Engine Company, Columbus, In.; Dave Ushio, special assistant in office of policy, budget, and administration, Department of the Interior, Washington: D. C.

Also Lorraine Misiaszek, acting director, Advocates for Indian Education, Spokane, Wa.; Jim Sansaver, resources development office, Billings area office, Billings, Mt.; Dr. Thomas Sawyer, director, ARIES Consulting Corp., Provo, Ut.; Ronald Toya, reservation program office, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Southern Pueblo Agency, Albuquerque, N.M.

Also Ray Goetting, National Congress of American Indians, Washington, D. C.; Stewart L. Udall, of counsel, Duncan, Brown, Weinberg & Palmer, Washington, D. C.; Earl Old Person, National Tribal Chairmen's Association, Washington, D. C.