Media Contact: Office of the Secretary
For Immediate Release: June 28, 1973
Print PDF

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton in a statement issued today urged support of legislation to restore the terminated Menominee Indians of Wisconsin to Federal status as Indians.

Marvin Franklin, Assistant to the Secretary for Indian Affairs, testified today before the Indian Affairs Subcommittee of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs in support of H.R. 7421, the Menominee Restoration Act.

The text of Secretary Morton's statement follows:

"Today the Department of the Interior has taken an important step to implement the policy of Indian self-determination which the President set forth in his July 8, 1970, Indian Message to the Congress. This position is a concrete reversal of the policy of terminating Indian tribes --discontinuing the Federal trusteeship for Indian land and ending special Federal services to Indian 'people --which dominated much of the 1950's and part of the 1960's.

"The policy of termination crystallized in the passage of House Concurrent Resolution 108, on August 1, 1953, which declared the withdrawal of Federal supervision over Indians to be the policy of the Congress. The Menominee's were the first Indian group to be terminated under the policy heralded by H.Con.Res. 108.

"The philosophy of termination has, in my judgment, long since been discredited. Its underlying premise --that Indians should relinquish their unique identities --is one which President Nixon rejected in his campaign for the Presidency. On September 27, 1968, he stated: "We must recognize that American society can allow many different cultures to flourish in harmony and we must provide an opportunity for those Indians wishing to do so to lead a useful and prosperous life in an Indian environment."

"I would add to this statement my own profound respect for the rich wisdom of Indian culture. I am convinced from my dealings with Indian people that the mainstream of American life is broad enough to hold more than one channel. I have been skeptical as to whether termination was willingly accepted by all tribes which underwent it.

"The Menominee case --in which per capita payments of certain funds due the tribe were attached to the Act authorizing termination --seems to bear this out. In his 1970 Indian Message the President repudiated the policy of "forced termination" in favor of Indian self-determination. Restoration of the Menominee's to Federal status helps achieve the shift in policy advocated in that message.

"Today Menominee County is engaged in a stiff battle for fiscal survival. Restoration of the Federal relationship should relieve the Menominee's of some of the burden which they have striven to shoulder since being terminated.

"I hope the Menominee Restoration Act will be enacted and that the Menominee's will prosper in their new relationship with the United States."