Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Marvin L. Franklin, Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, announced today that representatives of the National Center for Dispute Settlement will preside at a meeting of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Indian Tribe in Holton, Kansas, Saturday, September 29. A move to stop the meeting had been turned down by the Federal Court on September 11 in Kansas City, Kansas.

This meeting is a rescheduling of a meeting called last November in which tribal members were to select a committee to draft a new constitution. The prior meeting was postponed due to threats of violence to tribal members.

Earlier, in October 1972, following a prolonged deadlock and a request from the majority of the Potawatomi business committee, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs had withdrawn approval of the tribe's constitution. It was hoped that this action would end the factionalism resulting from weaknesses in that governing document and clear the way for a new constitution that would unite the tribe behind its governing body.

The National Center for Dispute Settlement of the American Arbitration Association is a private non-profit organization devoted to the peaceful resolution of public and community issues.

"The purpose of having professional neutrals preside at this meeting," Mr. Franklin said, "is to foster an atmosphere wherein democratic processes and self-determination can function. This procedure should encourage a large turnout of tribal members and insure a fair and orderly selection of a representative committee."