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Adult Indians on reservations who missed the advantages of education in their youth and are now handicapped by lack of ability to read, write, speak or understand the English language will be given an opportunity to develop these basic skills under a new Indian Bureau Program announced today by Commissioner Glenn L. Emmons.

The program will be initiated at five tribal jurisdictions where the need is especially acute: Seminole of Florida, Papago of Arizona, Rosebud Sioux of South Dakota, Turtle Mountain Chippewa of North Dakota, and Fort Hall (Shoshone-Bannock) of Idaho. Operations will begin at Seminole in the next few weeks and at the other four localities around the turn of the year.

“For many years,” Commissioner Emmons explained, "I have felt that one of the biggest factors holding Indian people back and retarding their advancement has been the lack of educational opportunities. Our first job, of courtesy was to make schooling available to all Indian youngsters of normal school age, and I am happy to report that we are now within striking distance of that objective" The next step is to provide some type of elementary schooling for grown-up Indians who have never had this advantage.

“There are thousands of such people living on reservations today and their needs were forcefully re-emphasized to me in Florida last December when Seminole Indians on the reservations were almost unanimous in asking us for an adult education program. These people, like those on many other reservations, are at a definite disadvantage because they are separated by a language barrier from the modern world in which they find themselves. As a result, they have great difficulties in earning even a minimum livelihood and are not able to enjoy the kind of benefits which most Americans take for granted.

“Through this new program we want to help these people so that they will be able to broaden their opportunities for employment and improve the living standards for their families. In my opinion, their needs represent a real challenge to the Bureau and a great opportunity for constructive accomplishment.

While the program will be limited initially to the five tribal areas mentioned, Mr. Emmons emphasized that it will be expanded later if satisfactory results are achieved and the Indians of other tribes indicate an interest in such operations.

No additional construction will be required as present facilities will be utilized.