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Since I first took office as Commissioner of Indian Affairs on August 10, 1953, I have received four invitations to attend the annual meetings of the Governors' Interstate Indian Council. And I have now managed to be present at three of these occasions. This gives me a percentage of 750 which, if I remember my baseball correctly, is a pretty fair batting average.

Seriously, though, it is always a pleasure to meet with this group. I enjoyed it at Carson City in 1953 even though I was then going through my apprentice period as Commissioner. I also have many pleasant memories of the 1954 meeting at Sun Valley and feelings of real regret because I was not able to join you a year ago at Santa Fe. So I have made it a special point to be on hand for this 1956 session in the community of Sheridan which has done such fine work over the past few years in developing a better public understanding and public appreciation of our American Indian people.

Right now I am in the midst of some rather extensive travels which I am making through the West this summer for the purpose of attending a series of meetings with Indian tribal officials. As some of you may know, this is the second time I have gone out on a major tour of this general type. The first trip took place nearly three years ago in the fall of 1953 when President Eisenhower himself asked me to take on the assignment of meeting with each of the major tribal groups in their home territory. In giving me this assignment, the President recalled the pledge which he made during the 1952 campaign that there would be full consultation with the Indian people and emphasized that he wanted this to be a basic principle in our administration of Indian affairs. From that day to the present time we have continually stressed the importance of full consultation and have made it the keystone in the whole arch of our policy structure.

The major purpose of my 1953 series of meetings with the tribal groups was underlined by the President in a letter which he wrote to me on September 2 of that year. Briefly stated, the primary aim of the tour was to learn first-hand from the Indian people themselves about their problems and needs, their hopes and aspirations. In other words, my assignment was to do a minimum of talking and a maximum of listening; and that is certainly the way I tried to carry it out. This time I have a twofold purpose. In addition to learning what is on the Indian leaders’ minds and receiving another first-hand report from them on present status, I also want to get down to brass tacks with these tribal delegates and discuss one topic which I regard as fundamentally and urgently important. It is the need for what I like to call “positive programming” to be carried out jointly by each of the tribal groups in cooperation and consultation with the. Indian Bureau.

Now, what do I mean by the term "positive programming"? Perhaps I can explain this best by referring first to the basic job which the Bureau of Indian Affairs is required to do under the provisions of the multitudinous Indian laws that have been enacted by Congress down through the years and under the treaties that were ratified prior to 1871. Despite all the comp1exities, that job, in essence, consists of two main phases. One is to exercise the trusteeship responsibilities covering about 54 million acres of Indian land. The other is to provide the Indian people with public services or community services, such as education and the like, where these are not available to them from other sources.

This double-barreled job is, of course, tremendously important and cannot be neglected. But the situation, it seems to me, clearly calls for something more than just trusteeship and community services if we are to move significantly forward toward the goal of a better future for the Indian people. This is what I have in mind when I talk about "positive programming". To me, the term means going beyond the day-to-day job of the Indian Bureau and, incidentally, the day-to-day job of the elected tribal officials. It means Bureau employees and tribal representatives sitting down together and coming to grips with the fundamental difficulties that have been retarding Indian progress for so many decades. It means cooperatively planning out the steps which are needed so that Indian people will at last have a chance to enjoy the kind of advantages and benefits which they clearly want to have and are unquestionable entitled to receive.

Let me emphasize, however, that I ant talking about opportunity for the Indian people and not about anything compulsive or coercive. I recognize, of course, that the Indian people are by no means all of one mind about the kind of life they want to lead. A substantial number of them, particularly in the younger generations and among the veterans of military service, have made it quite clear that they want to take their place in the non-Indian society of the Nation and make their way without discrimination and without special favors. Others, at the opposite extreme, prefer to go on living in the old tribal way, following the customs and religion of their ancestors, and having no more than necessary to do with what we call modern American life. Still others stand somewhere in between. They are the people-- and I suspect they constitute a majority of the whole Indian population—who want a kind of mixture of the two cultures. They like many aspects of modern American life and want to enjoy its benefits and its fruits the same as the rest of us. Yet, for wholly understandable reasons, they also want to preserve their tribal affiliations and maintain their heritage as Indian people.

I have stressed these varying points of view among the Indian population because it seems to me that we have had an unnecessary amount of confusion and emotional discussion revolving around such questions as the preservation of Indian culture and around words like "assimilation" and "integration”. As I see it, all matters of this kind - involving culture or religion or basic way of life - are outside the sphere of Indian Bureau action. They are strictly up to the individual Indian and should be decided by him in accordance with the dictates of his own personality. ·

By the same token, the Bureau has no intention of breaking up tribal Organizations or selling off reservation lands against the wishes of the Indian people. We are fully aware of the importance which many Indians place on their tribal membership and we respect these feelings completely, All we want to be sure of in this context is that the rights of the individual Indian are not overridden or sacrificed in the interests of the tribal group. And our primary concern, as reflected in this emphasis on positive programming, is to be sure that the individual tribal member really has a free choice and is not condemned to a disgracefully low standard of living through no fault of his own.

As some of you may know, the philosophy which I have been expressing here today is not exactly new with me. Long before I ever became Commissioner of Indian Affairs, I developed a strong feeling of warmth and friendliness toward the Indian people. I felt that they had capabilities and potentialities for constructive accomplishment in many fields of activity which had never been fully realized or brought to fruit. And I was emphasizing then, as I do today, the central, fundamental importance of providing them with a wider and fuller range of opportunity. In fact, I believe keenly that positive programs such as I have in mind should have been started about 40 years ago; and if they had been initiated at that time, I seriously doubt whether we would now have what some people call "the Indian problem". But that, of course, is water over the dam and it is certainly preferable to get started on such programming now

than to wait another 40 years.

For at least several years before l took office in l953, I had worked out not only a general philosophy of what needed to be done in the field of Indian affairs but a more or less specific outline of just what steps should be taken. While my administrative experiences of the pa.st three years have undoubtedly "put some meat on the bones" - so to speak - and changed my thinking in some minor particulars, the broad framework still remains the same. In fact, I am now more convinced than ever of its basic soundness.

The first essential, as I saw it, might well be summed up in the old Latin phrase about "a sound mind in a sound body". More specifically, I felt that a prime requisite to any real advancement by the Indian people was to see that they have the same kind of health protection and at least the minimum educational opportunities which are available to other citizens throughout the country. One of the most critical problems facing us when I took office was that so many Indian families on so many reservations had been denied these benefits and advantages for such a long time.

So in the winter of 1953 and 1954 we formulated plans for a two-pronged attack on this problem. On the health side our first action was to strengthen and expand greatly the disease prevention and sanitation phases of our work. Then we followed this up with a long-range look at the whole healt4 picture among the Indian people. One fact which stood out clearly was that the Bureau of Indian Affairs had never managed to get really on top of the Indian health problem. Chronically the Bureau had difficulties in recruiting and retaining well-qualified medical personnel for service in reservation areas; chronically it had been borrowing most of its key personnel from the United States Public Health Service. Since the big need was for a greatly invigorated drive in preventive medicine and since the Public Health Service is especially expert in this field, we felt that the logical move was a transfer of the whole Indian health program over to that agency. So we violated all the generally accepted rules of bureaucratic behavior and actually urged the enactment of congressional legislation which would shift over to another branch of Government something like one-fourth of all our personnel. and an inventory of real and personal property valued at about $40 million. This legislation was approved by the President in early August of 1954 and about eleven months later, on July l, 1955, the transfer was completed.

Since the transfer has been in effect only a little over a year, it is, of course, still too early to come up with any final judgments. However, the facts and figures which are available are both interesting and encouraging. For one thing the technical or professional staff working in the Indian health program has increased by about 85 percent-... from 328 in 1953 to 609 by the latest count. The appropriations have gone up in similar proportion--from a little over $21 million in 1953 to more than $38 million in the present fiscal year. The daily average number of Indians receiving medical care, either in Federal hospitals or in other hospitals under contract, has risen over the same period from about 3,200 to nearly 4,200 and the waiting list of tubercular patients, which totaled 1,100 for the Navajo Reservation and Alaska alone in 1953, has now been eliminated. In the light of facts such as these, I certainly have no regrets or misgivings about the decision we made over two years ago to push for a transfer of the Indian health program.

The second phase of our "sound mind in sound body" campaign was in the field of education. Here the biggest and most urgent area of need when I took office was on the Navajo Reservation where about 80 percent of the adult population was illiterate and roughly half of the children in the school-age bracket between 6 and 18 were growing up, through no fault of their own or their parents, as the potential illiterates of the future. To bring this critically important problem under control as quickly as possible,

we initiated an emergency program in the early months of 1954 involving several different lines of approach. We expanded and enlarged our Federal school facilities for Navajos both on and off the reservation. We provided board and room in border towns such as Gallup, Flagstaff and Winslow so that Navajo children beyond the early grades could attend the public schools of these communities.

Now let’s take a quick look at the results. When we started planning on this program in the winter of 1953 and 1954, the total enrollment of Navajo children in schools of all kinds was probably between 14,000 and 15,000. We have to say "probably" because the exact figure for public school enrollment at that particular time is not available to us. But we do know that the enrollment this past school year was well over 25,000 and that no Navajo youngsters were turned away from the schoolhouse doors because of lack of space. This fall we are completely confident that school seats will be available for all. Navajo children of school age including the increase which is, of course, constantly taking place.

In the meantime we have also started a program for the benefit of those adult Indian people who missed the advantages of education in their youth. As some of you probably know, this is a critical problem in several tribal groups such as the Seminoles of Florida and the Papagos of Arizona. The program which we launched on a pilot basis last October is confined to five tribal areas—the two that I have just mentioned plus the Turtle Mountain Chippewa group of North Dakota, the Fort Hall Indians of Idaho, and the Rosebud Sioux of South Dakota. Here again it is still too early for any final assessment of results but the preliminary reports are encouraging and indicate a steadily growing interest among the tribal members. As we have already announced, the program will be extended to other tribal areas wherever there is a demand for such activity within the general framework of available funds and personnel.

In spite of the big advances that have been made in Indian health and education over the past three years, I certainly would not want to leave any of you with the impression that all problems in these two fields have now been solved or that we are planning to rest on our oars. We are fully aware of the many difficult local situations which still face us in Indian education and of the great effort that will be required just to keep abreast of the constantly increasing school-age population at places like the Navajo Reservation. The Public Health Service, I feel sure, would tell us much the same thing about the job ahead in the field of Indian health,

However, I believe it is fair to say that the most critical and urgent problems - the really big problems - that confronted us in health and education three years ago have now been surmounted and a good, solid groundwork has been laid for future improvements and advances. As a result, we in the Bureau of Indian Affairs can now concentrate a much larger share of our attention and energies on the third major problem of the Indian people which I have been emphasizing since I first took office. This is the problem of providing them with the same kind of opportunities for economic advancement - for making a decent livelihood and improving their living standards 1- which Americans of other races normally and typically enjoy. It is in many ways the most difficult and challenging phase of the three-point program which we have been carrying forward in the Indian Bureau since 1953.

There is, of course, nothing new in being concerned about the economic well-being of the Indian population. Much thought and study have been given to the problem; many plans and panaceas have been offered up. Without attempting to analyze all of these schemes and proposals, I would like to consider for the next few minutes two ideas which have, it seems to me, aroused a rather wide spread degree of support among some of the friends of the Indian people.

One is the proposal that there should be a tremendous expenditure of Federal funds to build up the land resources of the reservations and develop a farm and livestock base for the Indian people.

As I see it, there are three serious deficiencies in this proposal to build the whole economic future of the Indian people around the resource base on the reservations.

One is the fact that on most reservations there simply is not enough land to go around. Just as one example, if we should divide the whole Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota up into economic size livestock units, it would provide an acceptable standard of living for just about 500 families. And that sounds fine. The only trouble with it is that there are 1,800 families living on the reservation right now and the population is growing all the time.

The second serious deficiency is that there are definite physical limits to what can be done in the way of resource development. Irrigation projects, to pick one example, cannot be located wherever we might like to have them. The lay of the land, the soil type, and many other factors have to be considered. And so it goes with other types of resource development work. Actually I am not aware of one single instance over the past three years where the Indian Bureau has ignored or rejected a really feasible and practical proposal for resource development that could be carried out with the funds available. During this same period our appropriations for resource activity have increased by 51 percent-- from less than 11 million dollars in fiscal 1953 to approximately 162 million at the present time. The fact is that we are constantly seeking out potential projects for the development of reservation resources, exploring the possibilities, and doing everything that can feasibly be done. If you examine the matter closely, you will certainly find that a great deal has been accomplished in this field over the past several years. And I can assure you that much more will be done in the future. I am not by any means writing off or de-emphasizing the importance of sound resource development. But I do believe that the “shotgun" type of approach which has been proposed in some quarters would be both wasteful and ineffective.

The third deficiency in this heavy emphasis on the importance of Indian land resources is perhaps the most important one of all. I realize that there are many humane and warm-hearted individuals in this country who like to think of the Indians as a people of the soil and who grow quite distressed about the prospect of Indians working in factories or taking up homes in some of our larger cities. But the fact is that it's probably a minority segment – and perhaps a rather small minority--of our whole Indian population which has any real interest in or aptitude for making a living by agriculture. For over 25 years now the Bureau of Indian Affairs has had an agricultural extension program to provide Indian people with help and guidance in the field of farm and livestock management. Many loans have been made available for this purpose; much assistance and encouragement have been provided. Yet what do we find? Over wide stretches of the Indian country the Indian who actually works his own land and makes his livelihood from crop or livestock production is the exception rather than the rule. In many cases, of course, this pattern of the Indian as a petty landlord collecting his rent rather than operating his own land is a result of the terrific fractionation of' allotted lands which has come about over the years through the process of inheritance. But another, and perhaps even more important, factor is that large numbers of the Indians, particularly in the younger generations, have no real feeling of a tie with the soil and no desire to follow an agricultural way of life. This is not just theory; it is based on interviews conducted in our Indian Bureau schools and on many other types of direct contact by our personnel with the rank and file of tribal members.

In addition to the proposal for a massive development program on the reservations, there is another, closely related, idea which I want to discuss more briefly. This is the concept that the economic

salvation of the Indian people lies principally in making loans to them on cheap and easy terms. I recognize that Indians, in some circumstances, have a need for special credit facilities tailored to their own requirements and we are continuing our credit program in the Bureau for Just this purpose. However, I never have believed and do not believe today that the Government should be called upon to finance unsound enterprises as a way of improving the Indians' economic status.

The program to provide Indians with greater economic opportunity which we have developed in the Bureau is based not on theoretical or abstract considerations but on the realities as we find them. One set of realities that guides us is the potentialities and limitations inherent in the 54 million or so acres of land which the Indian people now have available for development and use. Another is the actual desires and aspirations of the Indians themselves. The program, as we have worked it out, consists of three main parts.

The first of these involves cooperative action by tribal representatives and Bureau employees to develop those constructive reservation programs which I mentioned near the beginning of this talk, Each of these programs, as we visualize it, would be aimed at the fullest practicable development of reservation resources and at general improvement of the economic climate on the reservation proper. Each would be based on a careful and thorough analysis of the local factual situation.

On April 12, I sent a memorandum to all of our field offices emphasizing the importance of this programming activity and giving each of our superintendents a definite assignment to initiate such consultations with the tribal groups. One of the major purposes of the series of meetings which I am now holding with tribal officials is to discuss this April 12, memorandum with them and give additional impetus to the whole undertaking. Personally I feel confident that the programs which eventually emerge from this consultation process will be sound because they will be based on the needs and desires expressed by the Indians themselves and on a close-up knowledge of the unique pattern of resources, laws, customs and the like which prevails on each reservation. This, of course, is infinitely preferable to any master plan that might be drawn up in Washington.

At this point some of you may be asking how all of this relates to the plan which I have mentioned on previous occasions for having comprehensive economic surveys made by research engineering groups in some of the more important reservation areas. We have been hoping, you may recall, to have these surveys financed outside of Government by contributions from foundations and other similar sources to a nonprofit corporation known as the American Indian Research Fund, Incorporated, which was organized at my urging about a year and a half ago. My answer to the question is that cooperative programming should not be held in abeyance until we can get the economic surveys under way. It will be valuable and fruitful even if no such survey is ever made in the particular area. Then if a survey can be initiated later on, so much the better. It will tie right in with the cooperative program work, provide a greater wealth of data for the planning and strengthen the whole process.

The second major phase of our economic opportunity program involves the establishment of private manufacturing plants in the near vicinity of reservation areas. It is an important part of the whole program because of two underlying facts which I have already mentioned.

One is the strictly limited capacity of reservation resources, even after full development, to support a rapidly growing tribal population. This point is rather dramatically illustrated by the situation that confronts us on the Navajo Reservation. According to various surveys and studies that have been made, the maximum number of people we could ever expect to make a decent living directly from the

reservation lands is somewhere between 35,000 and 45,000. When I first came to Gallup in 1919, the tribal population was generally estimated to be about 29,000-still safely within the limit. Over the past 37 years, however, the population has more than doubled and now stands around 78,000. In another six years, if our projections are correct, it will reach the level of 100,000; and by the year 2000, which is only 44 years in the future, we can expect a population of 350,000. And all of this on a reservation which will support at the maximum about 45,000 people! When you consider that we face a roughly similar situation on many, if not most, other reservations, it becomes almost painfully clear why we cannot afford to put all of our eggs in the resource development basket.

Another reason why it would be unwise to do so is because so many of the younger Indians, as I previously mentioned, have so little interest in and aptitude for agricultural pursuits. Yet many of these same individuals have shown a remarkable degree of manual dexterity and proficiency in mechanical processes. This has been demonstrated time and again in test after test. The real tragedy of the situation, as I see it, is that Indian people generally have had so little opportunity in years past to utilize these special skills in improving their living standards and adding to the total productive capacity of the Nation.

We have a number of examples indicating what can be done in this field. There is, for instance, the electronics manufacturing plant of the Simpson Electric Company at Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, which has been providing Chippewa Indians with steady year-round employment for approximately a decade. There is the jewel bearing plant of the Bulova Watch Company at Rolla, North Dakota, where Indian workers from the Turtle Mountain group have established an outstanding record as employees. Their rate of absenteeism from the job has been about three percent as compared with national average of six. The rate of turnover has also been about three percent, which again is half the national average.

Another and more recent case in point was the action of Saddlecraft, Incorporated, in establishing a plant for the manufacture of leather moccasins, just a few months ago near our Cherokee Agency in North Carolina. Although the operations have been under-way at Cherokee for only a short time, the plant is already providing steady employment for 21 Cherokee workers and the weekly payroll is approximately $1,000. In time I feel sure that both of these figures will grow substantially.

The Navajo tribe, as many of you probably know, has shown an especially dynamic kind of interest in attracting industry to the vicinity of the reservation. In fact, the tribe has appropriated $300,000 of its own funds for this purpose and has, I might add ruefully, lured away one of our more able Indian Bureau employees to head up the program. The first tangible result of this operation came on June 15 when a contract was finalized between the tribe and the Baby Line Furniture Company of Los Angeles. Under this contract the tribe is furnishing the company with a site for a branch establishment and will spend considerable money for plant improvements, facilities, and services. In return the company is turning over one fourth of its profits from this branch plant to the tribe, is employing Navajo workers, and is training them for advancement to supervisory jobs. Inside of a year it is exl'8cted that employment will be provided for about 100 Navajo workers.

Now that may not sound like a very large figure in a tribe of 78,000 people but it is something like an iceberg where only a fraction of the total bulk shows above the surface of the 'Water. A recent study by the United States Chamber of Commerce entitled "What New Industrial Jobs Mean to a Community" illustrates quite graphically, what I have in mind. According to this study; which covered a number of sample areas in the southeastern part of the country, when 100 new jobs in basic industry are provided in a community, a kind of chain reaction of economic benefit is set in motion, The figures cited in the

study are, of course, not universally applicable but are indicative of the kind of results that can be expected. They show that for every 100 new jobs in the basic industries, we have 74 additional new jobs in the community in retail establishments, service trades, and the like. We have four new retail outlets established, $360,000 more per year in retail sales, 107 more passenger cars registered, $270,000 more in bank deposits (maybe I should have placed that item last), and $590,000 more per year in personal income. These figures, indicative as I say, will perhaps give you some idea why we are now placing an increasing amount of emphasis on the industrial phase of our economic opportunity program.

The third phase of the program is what we call voluntary relocation. As some of you may know--if you have been reading your magazines lately - that word "relocation" seems to upset certain people - apparently because it suggests uprooting the Indians from their serene pastoral environment and plunging them down in some kind of a nerve-wracking asphalt jungle. Actually, relocation of Indian people away from the reservations is not new at all. For at least a generation, and probably longer, Indian families have been moving away from the impoverished environment of reservations and seeking better opportunities elsewhere. And I have no doubt that they would still be doing so in increasing numbers even if the Bureau of Indian Affairs had never established a voluntary relocation program. The main trouble with the earlier unassisted relocation movement "Was that the migrating Indian too often ended up in a slum environment and found himself eventually defeated by the complexities of big-city life.

It is precisely this kind of situation that we are trying to avoid through the Bureau program. What we are doing, in essence, is to guide and channelize this voluntary movement along healthy and beneficial lines and assist the relocating families in the many admittedly difficult personal adjustments which they are called upon to make. I believe we have been doing a highly creditable job in this and I have no doubt that we are getting better all the time. In 1953 thirty-two percent of those who relocated eventually returned to the reservations. In 1954 this was reduced to 28 percent and last year it was down to 24 percent.

What's more, in the current fiscal year our funds available for relocation are more than three times greater than they were a year ago. With these funds we are making available for the first time this year certain new types of services—such as grants for night-school training, grants for the purchase of health insurance, and a limited number of matching grants to help in the down-payment on the purchase of a home. We are also greatly enlarging our staff of relocation counsellors, both on the reservations and in the city offices. Thus we should be in position to provide a much more intensive and personalized kind of guidance than has been possible in previous years.

But what, you may ask, about this charge that the voluntary relocation program is merely a subtle plot to separate the Indian from his land resources? Although we were not aware of any such sinister motives, we decided several weeks ago that it might be interesting to find out whether we were accomplishing such results unwittingly. So we took a couple of hundred cases at random from the files in our Los Angeles office and ran a check. We found that 80 percent of these relocated families had never had any land holdings to worry about in the first place. As for the other 20 percent, none of them had given up their land holdings prior to relocation and all of them were continuing to receive rental income just as they had been all along. In short, the effect of relocation on the land holdings of these 200 families was precisely zero. Yet we read in a national magazine an article which refers to the relocation program as "the raid on the reservations".

And now I would like to recapitulate and summarize very briefly the major points in our program. First,

we have taken the necessary steps in health and education to insure that Indian people will be as well equipped as possible, physically and mentally, for a more productive and enjoyable kind of living than many of them have known in the past. Through resource development and encouragement of industry, we are working to provide the highest possible level of economic opportunity in and around the reservations. Through guidance and help in voluntary relocation, we are furnishing a productive and beneficial outlet for what may be termed "the surplus population."

Personally I have great faith in this program and great expectations of the benefits it will eventually produce. As we carry it forward, I feel confident that large numbers of the Indian people will benefit not only through an improvement in their basic living standards but through pride of accomplishment and greater feelings of self-respect and self-reliance. The States and local communities will benefit from the increasing financial independence of the Indian people and the general invigoration of the economic climate in and around the reservations. In time the whole country will benefit by a reduction in the Federal expenditures which will be needed for Indian affairs and by a steady increase in purchasing power and productivity among the Indian segment of the population.

Over and above these potential benefits, however., there is one consideration in particular that keeps me enthusiastically at work on this job. It is the prospect--the real probability, As I see it -- of finally working out a sound and decent and humane resolution or this most difficult problem in human relationships which has perplexed us since the earliest days of the Republic. I believe that it can and will be done and that we are now making big and important strides in the right direction.