



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Good morning - distinguished members of the press, Representatives of the Indian desks, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my privilege and honor to address you as the newly elected president of the national tribal chairmen's Association. There are 146 federally recognized tribes in the organization, represented by their chief elected official. We have a 12 member board of directors. The Tribal chairmen who sit on this board were elected as area representatives. The NTCA began in 1970 with a meeting held in Denver, Colorado. Since then we have come a long way in establishing the NTCA as an effective arm of the tribes on both the state and national scene. Our offices are located with the offices of the NCIO staff in the new executive office building.

First, I would like to express my thanks to the tribal chairmen of the country for giving me the opportunity to work with them in the American Indian transition as we mark the beginning of the Indian age. The role; of the national tribal chairmen's association is to be the advocates of and for our Indian people. NTCA has directed itself to the immediate and future needs of our humble Native Americans. Immediate and future needs of our humble Native Americans. The tribal chairmen are duly elected representatives of their reservations and strive to serve the needs of their people. The NTCA was established primarily to enable the leaders of our sovereign Indian nations to speak with one voice to the federal sector. We must be vigilant and guard against efforts to weaken this voice and the strong tribal leadership it represents, and to obstruct our direct relationship with the federal government. Our Indian lands must be kept in trust status and we must strive to have the submarginal land turned over to the tribes as soon as possible.

Today, the emphasis must be based on some identifiable factors relating to Indian people. Consultation, involvement, legislation, tribal domestic planning and Indian program budgets, only to mention a few. Principally, I am concerned with the seven bills that were produced by the present administration in the July 8, 1970 message which expressed self-determination of Indian people. If in fact the president is attempting to implement an Indian policy than he must be given the opportunity. NTCA is concerned with fulfilling the American Indians needs instead of being continuously used for individuals self-gains in our political system;

Let us address ourselves to the identifiable factors that were mentioned above.

1. Consultation - programs and policies are most applicable when people have some knowledge and understanding of them. We must communicate national direction for our people back home. Sharing our opinions helps to draw some conclusions on where our national effort should be placed.
2. Involvement - there is absolutely no reason, in the shape of national Indian affairs, why the Indian leadership should not be called upon to become involved in developing methods of protecting their own destiny. Indians understand themselves, so federalists should not attempt to interpret what is best for us. If programs policies and legislation are going to serve our best interest then we must be consulted and involved from the very beginning'; the significant interest of Indian

people should be to react favorably and use constructive means to enhance our people in all phases of our life-style. Since this country has ours in the beginning it is our birth right; and we should involve Indian people in any transitions that effect their immediate and future needs.

3. Legislation - we have found that legislative branch is big medicine. Today, among Indian people there is a monumental concern regarding legislation. We become more concerned about the maneuvers of congress to arrange Indians in some match box configuration or even cage us forever. We need help in the vast area of legislation because we do not know the internal structures that exist in the house and senate: the NTCA is presently working with the national council on Indian opportunity to gain some understanding of legislative process. The American Indian person must have good government and legislation benefiting the Indian people.
4. Tribal domestic planning - the NTCA must be involved in an adequate overall planning to advocate constructive programs, to gain some measure of success from allocations by congress and office management and budget. The Indian people must use planning schedules to utilize available resources and planning mechanism to insure proper funding to carry out our objectives.

The NTCA is deeply concerned when tribal plans are not carried out. They are a meaningless exercise without the funds to carry our people's plans through to completion. Every tribe has taken steps of some kind to develop tribal programs and priorities to better utilize the federal dollar for the people. Although, the tribes find it hopeless if our tribal program priorities are cut to serve off-reservation priorities when the funds should remain with the reservations. Our Indian programs funds should remain at the tribe's discretion to expend at the local level for the tribe's presently, I am concerned with the bureau of Indian affairs budget cuts because it has a direct impact on our local tribal efforts. For example, we are being told that congress appropriated funds for an Indian claims bill which is a sum of \$50,000,000 and the BIA has the responsibility to pay the 50 million out of its budget for FY1974 with no increase in funds. This means that the other tribe's budgets will be cut to scrape up the 50 million to pay the claims bill. The BIA should not have to cut other tribes budgets- to make up for the 50 million. BIA should have a special allocation from OMB as an add on to pay off the claims bill. We must admire the commissioner of Indian affairs, Louis R. Bruce, for his heroic stand in refusing to cut his budget at the interior department's request.

I am hoping the OMB will allocate funds to the new Indian Education Act, Title IV, PL 92-318 for this present fiscal year to assist our Indian children. We hope some funds will be placed in the act to start the Indian education program wheels rolling.

We hope federal agencies will make every effort to place Indian women as well as men in positions of responsibilities, based on qualifications. As the president of the NTCA I would like to express my appreciation to the present administration for the turning' back of 21,000 acres of national forest land to the Yakima Indian tribe in the state of Washington and the restoration of blue lake to the Taos Indians in New Mexico.

In conclusion - let us understand ourselves as human beings placed on earth in service of others and direct our energies towards dedicating ourselves to complete protection of Indian lands, water, resources, and the education and welfare of Indian people.