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Because of the warmly sympathetic interest which your National Society has taken in the welfare of our Indian citizens over a period of many years, I consider it a real privilege and an honor that you have invited me to speak to you here today on my favorite subject.

In the limited time available to me, it will not be possible to do much more than hit the high spots. But I do want to take advantage of this opportunity to give you, briefly, my own impressions of where we stand today in the complicated field of Indian affairs, where we are trying to go, and what the prospects are for the future.

In talking about where we are today, I could, of course, dwell at considerable length on the more depressing aspects of the picture--as I have done on numerous other occasions. I could talk about poverty and hopelessness, about poor health and illiteracy, about juvenile delinquency and all the other social ills that can be found in many reservation areas--particularly if you go out hunting for them.

However, without minimizing the importance of these problems for a moment, I would like to concentrate for just a little bit here on some of the brighter aspects of the picture. I do this deliberately as a kind of antidote for the type of literature with which I am sure all of you are only too familiar. It is the sort of literature which focuses exclusively on the blackest problem areas-- the Indian families huddled together in miserable tar paper shacks on the outskirts of some western town--and leaves the reader with a feeling that all is lost.

Now I feel that the facts on what we might call “the debit side of the ledger” have already been sufficiently emphasized in the public prints and are well enough known to an audience such as this one. But on the credit side there are also facts--positive and encouraging facts - which, for one reason or another, don’t always seem to command the same degree of public attention. Let me mention just a few that come most readily to mind.

For one thing, I think it is wholly clear that more Indians are voting today and playing an active part in national, state and local elections than at any previous time in our history when we recall that many of the Indians did not acquire citizenship status until 1924, the full significance of this becomes more readily apparent. It is, to my mind, a deeply encouraging fact and one that bodes well for the future of our country.

In addition, there are more Indians today than ever before attending colleges and other institutions of

higher learning--about three or four times as many as there were 20 years ago. There are more Indian youngsters enrolled in the public schools of the Nation - about 72,000 in the United States and Alaska, according to our latest records, as contrasted with only 246 in 1900.

One of our proudest achievements was on the Navajo Reservation where only about half of the school-age population of 28,000 was attending school in the fall of 1953. Two years later, as a result of a "crash" program, we were able for the first time in history to accommodate all of the Navajo children who presented themselves for education. Because the Navajo population of school-age is growing constantly and rapidly, we have since dropped back a bit from this high point and are now engaged in a long-range planning of school facilities that will permit us to stay constantly abreast. But the point I want to emphasize is that we have "broken the back" of the long-standing Navajo education problem through our two-year program. If we can stay on top of this situation, we will achieve an objective of major importance to the Indian people.

On the economic side there are a number of encouraging facts. Today, for example, there are literally thousands of Indian families from reservations living in cities such as Los Angeles and Denver and Chicago who are enjoying far better living standards than they have ever previously known. There are hundreds of other families still living in the neighborhood of the reservations who are benefiting from the steady jobs made available in new manufacturing plants that have recently been set up in several of these areas. And there are many tribal groups, such as the Jicarilla Apaches of New Mexico and the Utes of Utah and Colorado, which have been receiving impressive financial benefits in recent years as a result of oil-and gas leasing on their lands. As an outstanding example of this latter activity, we have the case of the Navajo Tribe which received bonus payments of roughly 33 million dollars from this source during the month of November in 1956.

Without going further into the "credit side of our ledger," I hope I have said enough here to indicate that the picture in Indian affairs today is not entirely black and that it does have its elements of hopefulness and progress and successful adjustment to the realities of 20th century life.

My own personal feeling has always been that our Indian people, taken by and large, are just as capable as any other group in the American population and that all they need is a chance to make a decent livelihood and to realize their inherent possibilities for advancement and personal growth. Ever since the days when the ancestors of you ladies sitting here today were fighting to establish our national independence, this country has been known as the land of opportunity. Yet the ironic fact is that this kind of opportunity has never been made fully available to our first Americans--the people whose ancestors preceded ours on this continent by probably several thousand years. My number one objective as Commissioner of Indian Affairs is to see, that our Indian people get this kind of opportunity so that they can take their rightful place alongside other citizens in the broad pattern of our national life.

Now you may well ask what is the nature of the problem here. If the Indians have the kind of natural abilities which I have been emphasizing, why is it that many of them are mired down in poverty around the reservations? Unfortunately there is no simple answer to this question but a large part of the answer, I believe, can be summed up in a very short phrase. It is "too many people and not enough land."

Although some of the tribes like the Utes and the Jicarilla Apaches have been getting excellent returns recently from the mineral resources of their lands, most of the tribes are not so fortunate. Even the

Navajos, with their recent unusual 33 million dollar-bonus income, have to spread these proceeds rather thin in programs that 'Will benefit some 80,000 people and there are many tribal groups throughout the country that have never realized a dollar from mineral leasing on their lands. Taken as a whole the lands available on Indian reservations and similar areas are not large - something over 50 million acres altogether--and their capacity to provide a decent livelihood for the families dependent on them is highly restricted. On reservation after reservation we find that the present resources will furnish an adequate living for only a fractional part of the present population. And, on top of this, the Indian population is growing in most places at a faster rate than the general population of the country.

On the Navajo Reservation, for example, the population when I first came to Gallup, New Mexico, in 1919 was estimated to be around 29,000. Today it stands at 80,000; in another five years it will reach the 100,000 mark; and by the year 2000, which is only 43 years away, it could be somewhere in the neighborhood of 350,000. Yet the resources of the Navajo Reservation, even after full development, will probably never support more than 45,000 people at a level which could be considered really adequate.

There, in a nutshell, you have the problem which we face not only on the Navajo Reservation but on scores of others throughout the Western States. Now what are we trying to do about it?

First, of course, we are emphasizing the progressive development of the resources available on the reservations--the lands and water, the timber, the grass and the minerals. We want to be sure that these resources are developed to the highest feasible point and that they are producing the maximum income for the Indian people that is consistent with sound principles of conservation. And I might add that the appropriations we have for this purpose today are more than twice what they were as recently as nine or 10 years ago.

From what I have already said, however, it should be clear that resource development alone will not provide a total answer to the problem. Even with the fullest development that we can imagine, the resources of the Navajo Reservation will probably never support more than 45,000 people at an acceptable standard of living. Those on the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation of South Dakota will not support more than about 500 families out of the 1,800 families now living there; those on the Papago Reservation in Arizona will not support more than about half of the present population. And so it goes.

Then we also have to think about the aptitudes and the inclinations of the Indian people. On many of the reservations the major part of the Indian land is not today being used by Indian farmers and stockmen but is being leased out to non-Indians and is producing a rental income for the Indian owners. Now, of course, there is nothing unusual about this; thousands of non-Indians throughout the country also own agricultural or grazing lands which they lease out to others for operation and production. But the point I want to emphasize is that it's only a minor segment of our population--Indian or non-Indians--which has any real aptitude or interest in making a living directly from the land. Even in rural areas, large numbers of the younger people, both Indian and non-Indian, have no desire to be stockmen or farmers today and would much prefer to be mechanics or accountants or industrial workers. I firmly believe they should have this opportunity.

So it is important to put our resource development work in proper perspective and to supplement it with other types of "economic opportunity" programs. As matters now stand, we have two of these programs actively under way and a third in the formative stages.

One of the active programs is what we call “relocation services." Essentially it's a program of guidance and assistance for Indian people--both workers and their families--who want to leave the reservations

and establish themselves in metropolitan areas where jobs are more plentiful and easier to find. Under this program we have counselors on the reservations to advise the Indian people who are thinking about a move and inform them realistically about the kinds of adjustments they will have to make. Then on the receiving end--in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, Denver, Chicago and St. Louis--we have offices which actively help the new arrivals in finding jobs, locating suitable housing, and getting generally adjusted to their new environment.

Now it is true that about one-fourth of the Indian people who have gone out under this program each year have eventually returned to the reservations because they found big-city life incompatible or for some other reason. But the other three-fourths, comprising about 12,000 Indian people altogether, have made some pretty remarkable adjustments. Nearly all of them are making far more money than they ever did previously; many of them are enjoying comforts and conveniences that they had never known before; and the great majority of them are gradually acquiring a new kind of self-reliance which is a wonderfully heartening thing to see.

But we also recognize that relocation is not the total answer even for the nonagricultural Indians since there are and always will be many thousands of Indian people who are understandably reluctant to leave their home areas and take up life in a city like Los Angeles or Chicago. So the second phase of our "economic opportunity" work is aimed at attracting new industries or manufacturing plants to the vicinity of the reservations. On this we are cooperating closely with the tribal organizations. Although this is a comparatively young program, dating back a little over a year, already some highly encouraging results have been achieved. Altogether six new plants have been established as a result of this program--two around the borders of the Navajo Reservation, one near the Cherokee Reservation in North Carolina, one in Montana near the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, one at. Casa Grande, Arizona, benefiting the Pima and Papago tribes, and one at Rapid City, South Dakota, benefiting the Sioux groups of that state. Each of these is expected to provide jobs for at least 100 Indian workers after about year of operation. In the months and years ahead we are hoping and expecting that many additional plants of this kind will be established in the neighborhood of these and other Indian reservations.

Finally we are now shaping up plans for a brand new program of adult vocational training which was made possible under congressional legislation enacted last year. As you can readily appreciate, this new operation, which we expect to start next July, will tie in quite directly with the relocation service and industrial development programs and will tend to reinforce them both. It is aimed primarily at the group of Indians on reservations between the ages of 18 and 35, and is designed to equip them with the skills they need to hold down better paying jobs and improve their family standards of living. Under the plans we have in mind the training would not be provided directly by the Bureau but would be made available by vocational schools or manufacturing concerns under contractual arrangements.

I sincerely hope that what I have said here will give you at least a broad picture of where we stand in Indian affairs today, what we are aiming to accomplish, and how we are going about the job. To summarize briefly, the biggest problem we face is the imbalance between population and resources on the reservations and our prime objective right now is to provide the Indian people with the kind of opportunities which all of us so prol1dly associate with American life. Our ultimate goal is to help them in improving their economic and social status to the point where they will no longer need the benefit of special services and protections from the Federal Government. Today I am more confident than ever before that we are now moving in straight line toward the achievement of this goal and that it will be finally accomplished in the not-too-distant future.