Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Development of both human and natural resources on Indian reservations will be the prime objective for the Bureau of Indian Affairs under the Kennedy Administration, Commissioner Philleo Nash told an audience in Denver, Colorado, Tuesday evening.

Visiting in Denver for a nationwide conference on Indian Bureau superintendents, the new Commissioner, woe entered on duty September 26, spoke on "The New Trail for American Indians" before a meeting of the Indian Visitors of the American Friends Service Committee.

In his talk Commissioner Nash indicated that in the period ahead the Bureau of Indian Affairs will be placing greater emphasis on developmental programs and less on the custodial phases of its work. The latter aspects, he added, have frequently received too much attention in previous years.

Nash warned, however, that economic development will not come easily or automatically to Indian peoples attempting to improve their lot. He listed four ingredients as essential.

"First, the tribes must be willing to invest some of their funds in the future. Some tribes have started remarkable economic projects with relatively small investments but none has been able to achieve real progress without putting at least some funds for work.

"Second, every tribe hoping to achieve substantial economic gains for its members must have and must support a tribal governing body which will study the tribe's problems and opportunities and then work hard and consistently to accomplish the desired goals.

"Third, a sound working partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs is essential. The role of the Bureau is to provide technical assistance to the tribe, not to manage the tribal programs or do the tribe's work. But a harmonious relationship between the tribe and the Bureau is a prerequisite to significant progress.

"Fourth, every tribe hoping to achieve anything of importance in economic development must encourage increasing cooperation between Indians and the imaginative, sympathetic, helpful people in the nearby non-Indian communities."

The meeting with Commissioner Nash was co-sponsored by the White Buffalo Council of American Indians, the Inter-Tribal Youth Club, the Watonka Club, and other Denver organizations.