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ADDRESS BY COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS GLENN L. EMMONS AT THE TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF INDIAN WORKERS, ESTES PARK, COLORADO, JULY 3, 1958

THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS FOR INDIAN DEVELOPMENT

When the last triennial conference of the National Fellowship of Indian Workers was held here at Estes Park back in 1955, it was a matter of real regret to me that I was unable to be with you in person. Those of you who attended that conference may recall that I had to be in Alaska at that particular time and that my speech was delivered for me by Assistant Commissioner Reid. This year I have been somewhat more fortunate in the scheduling of my time and I have thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity to be here and to sit in--although somewhat briefly--on your sessions and deliberations.

In the time you have given me here this evening I would like to present for the most part a kind of progress report. My thought is to hark back to some of the major points touched on in my 1955 speech and try to bring them up to date. Then I also want to present my personal views on why we have a so-called "Indian problem" in the United States today and how you people can help in bringing about a long-range solution. Thirdly and lastly, I plan to take just a brief look at the period ahead in Indian affairs.

Needless to say, I am not expecting any of you here this evening to remember the details of what I had to say in a speech delivered on my behalf before this organization three years ago. I have difficulty enough in remembering my own speeches over a period of three years. So I am fully prepared, after having checked back on the 1955 text, to refresh both your memories and my own.

One of the points I touched on quite early in the speech of three years ago was the question of Indian health. As it happened, the transfer of our Indian Bureau health program over to the United States Public Health Service was consummated on July 1, 1955, just 10 days before the date of my speech. So I naturally had quite a bit to say about this transfer and why we in the Bureau had felt it would be desirable and beneficial to the Indian people. I expressed confidence that the Indian health picture was "more deeply encouraging than ever before in the long history of our efforts to deal with this basic problem."

In the light of all this, it is interesting, now in the summer of 1958, to review some of the highlights of progress in the Indian health program. Since the transfer took place, the appropriations for the program, including construction, have been substantially increased and are now nearly twice as large as they were in the fiscal year 1955. The number of doctors working on the program has been nearly doubled; the number of public health nurses has increased by one-third; and the health education and sanitation staffs have been significantly enlarged. Even more important perhaps, these increases in funds and personnel have begun to produce measurable results in the health of Indian people.

Take tuberculosis, for example, which was for so many years the Number One killer among the Indian population. Since the 1955 transfer the number of new cases among Indians in the continental United States has dropped by 30 percent and the Indian tuberculosis death rate has been reduced by approximately one-fourth. The list of tuberculosis patients waiting for hospitalization, which numbered in the hundreds three years ago, has now been eliminated entirely. Beds are available for all. During this same period the death rate from gastro-enteric diseases--one of our real Indian problems, as you probably know--has been cut approximately in half, from 50.4 to 26.5 per 100,000 population, and the crucially important infant death rate has dropped by 17 percent.

These facts and figures and others like them that could additionally be cited do not mean, of course, that all Indian health problems have been solved and that nothing more remains to be done. Far from it. But they do represent an impressive measure of progress that has been achieved over the past three years and I am frank to say that the benefits accomplished in this period for the Indian people have exceeded even my most optimistic expectations. The only real grounds for regret we now have, as I see it, would be that this responsibility was not transferred to the Public Health Service some 10 or 20 years ago.

Another topic of major importance which I discussed in my 1955 speech was the need to provide the Indian people with broader and more adequate educational opportunities. At that time, as some of you may recall, we were focusing primary attention on the Navajo Reservation because of the tremendous problem in shortage of school facilities which had developed there as a kind of chronic situation. In my speech at Estes Park I pointed out that in June of 1953 "there were only about 14,000 Navajo children enrolled in school out of a school-age population of approximately 28,000" and that "almost exactly half of the rising generation was being condemned to illiteracy" under these conditions. Then I went on to describe the special emergency program that we had developed to enlarge the school opportunities and reported that the total enrollment of Navajo children in schools of all kinds had been increased from 14,000 in 1953 to approximately 23,000 in the spring of 1955.

Since then a great deal of water has flowed under the bridge. After we had made tremendous progress on our original Navajo educational objective by the fall of 1955, I must admit that we fell back a bit because of a combination of budget limitations, a rapidly increasing school-age population, and the steady deterioration of our older Indian Bureau school buildings and facilities. As a result, even though we now have a Navajo school enrollment of about 90 percent, as contrasted with 50 percent in 1953, we still have roughly 3,000 Navajo children out of school. And we are also faced with a similar problem of somewhat smaller dimensions in Alaska and at several other tribal jurisdictions.

However, I am happy to report that Congress has given tangible recognition to this problem by providing us with substantially increased funds for construction and rehabilitation of school facilities in the new fiscal year which started just two days ago. Altogether we have over \$22,000,000 for this purpose, including some \$2,300,000 for the work in Alaska and approximately \$9,000,000 for the Navajo and Hopi jurisdictions, and roughly \$10,700,000 for the rest of the continental United States. With these funds it will be possible to make a good start on reconstructing or replacing some of our most antiquated and seriously inadequate school structures and to provide accommodations for something in the neighborhood of an additional 2,500 children. Within the next few years I am hopeful that we can make still further progress and have, for the first time in American history, an enrollment of Indian children in schools of all types that will include virtually all the children of normal school age.

Moreover, our activity in the field of Indian education is by no means limited nowadays to the youngsters between the ages of six and eighteen. As many of you doubtless know, we are now engaged in providing vocational training for adult Indians who want and need it and we are also furnishing a more basic kind of adult education for the illiterate or inadequately educated adult Indians on a substantial number of reservations. Because the vocational training is closely related to our economic development work, I want to postpone my discussion of that subject a bit. But I believe this is the proper place to tell you something about our adult education work on the reservations.

The need for adult education on many of the Indian reservations was brought home to me most forcefully, I suppose, at a series of meetings I had with the Seminoles of Florida in December of 1954. As some of you probably know, a very large percentage of the adult Indians in this tribal group have had no schooling whatsoever and only a comparative few of them have any really adequate command of the English language. At all of the meetings I held with them I asked whether they would like to have some instruction to overcome these handicaps and I was both amazed and delighted by the enthusiasm and virtual unanimity of their response.

Because of budgetary limitations, it was not possible to do anything about this need immediately following these 1954 meetings. However, we kept the idea in mind and by October of 1955--just a few months after your last triennial meeting--we were able to announce a pilot program. In launching this experiment we selected five of the reservations where we felt the need was particularly acute. These included Seminole of Florida, Rosebud Sioux of South Dakota, Turtle Mountain Chippewa of North Dakota, Fort Hall of Idaho, and Papago of Arizona. On all of these reservations we have, as some of you well know, a substantial number of adult Indians who received little or no schooling in their youth and who are seriously handicapped at the present time as a direct result.

Our pilot program in adult education on these five reservations actually began operations in the early months of 1956 and has been going on continuously ever since. The classes, of course, are purely voluntary and are held mainly in the evening for the convenience of those who work during the day. They include not only instruction in reading and writing English, where needed, but also a wide range of subjects such as homemaking, arithmetic, typing, money management, citizenship participation, and many others.

After the program had operated about one year on a trial basis, the results were so promising that we made this activity a part of our regular budget presentation and expanded the work to a large number of additional reservation locations. Today courses of this kind are being given at 59 Indian communities in the United States and 13 in Alaska or a total of 72 altogether. About 600 adults are enrolled in formal classes and another 1,100 or so are engaged in informal learning activities under the guidance of our adult education teachers. Altogether it adds up to a widespread and many-sided program aimed at repairing the damages of past educational neglect.

Another item of real progress in Indian education that I want to mention here is the steadily increasing enrollment of Indian youngsters in higher institutions beyond the high school level and the broadened opportunities for scholarship aid that are now available to them. Just three years ago, in the fiscal year 1955, we had only about \$20,000 in our Indian Bureau appropriations that could be used for scholarship assistance. Since then, largely through the efforts of Senator Karl E. Mundt of South Dakota, the amount available for this purpose has been increased first to \$50,000, then to \$70,000, and most recently to \$145,000, which represents the figure for the fiscal year just ended and also the amount available for the new fiscal year of 1959. Meanwhile the scholarships and other aids available to Indian students from tribal funds and nongovernmental sources have been constantly growing and are now undoubtedly more plentiful than ever before. When the fall term opens next September, we are almost certain to have a record enrollment of Indian students in colleges and universities and similar institutions throughout the country and our best guess is that the total will be around 3,200 or approximately four times what it was about 20 years ago.

Turning now to the development of broader economic opportunities for Indian people, I am able to report a large amount of forward movement since July 1955. At that time we were approaching our economic objectives chiefly along two main lines--through the progressive development of Indian resources on the reservations and through a voluntary program of relocation services. Today we have two additional avenues of approach. One is our program of cooperating with tribal groups and local communities to attract new industries to the vicinity of the reservations. The other is the program of vocational training which I have already mentioned.

Our industrial development program was formally initiated in the summer of 1955, not too many weeks after your last triennial meeting. For a period of about a year the work was carried on very largely by one man who was my personal assistant. Since then, however, we have taken several steps to give additional scope and importance to this program. For one thing we have established a new branch with staff both in Washington and at field points devoting full time to these operations. Secondly, we have broadened our Indian credit program so that loans can now be made to tribal organizations for the specific purpose of attracting new industries to the vicinity of the reservations. Thirdly, we have secured the consultant services of Mr. Noel Sargent, who was formerly connected with the National Association of Manufacturers in top staff positions and is widely recognized as one of the national leaders in the industrial development field.

One of the main reasons why we launched this industrial development work originally and why we are carrying it forward today is because it will provide Indian people with opportunities for steady, year-round employment near the reservations. Regardless of what you may hear, none of us in the Bureau has ever felt that voluntary relocation is the full answer to all the economic problems of the Indian people. But all of us have been concerned with the lack of regular payroll industries in and around the reservation areas. So it seems to me that we are making a logical and almost a necessary move when we collaborate with the tribes and the communities in an effort to overcome this deficiency.

Admittedly, the results accomplished to date under this program have not been tremendous or spectacular. Progress is necessarily somewhat slow in this difficult field where we are dealing with tough-minded industrialists and competing, in a sense, with industry-conscious communities all over the country. Nevertheless, I personally believe that we have made a good start and that our prospects for further growth and development along these lines are not at all

discouraging. Today we have eleven plants near reservations in seven States from North Carolina to Washington that are providing training or employment or both for Indian workers. And I am confident that the number of such plants and the numbers of Indians they employ will continue to grow in the years ahead now that the groundwork has been laid.

The vocational training program is, of course, the newest phase of our economic development work. It was started on July 1, 1957 under the authority of Public Law 959 of the 84th Congress and is aimed principally at Indian people in the age bracket from 18 to 35. During the past year we have been providing for two major kinds of training under this program.

One is what we call institutional training. This involves the enrollment of Indian trainees in regularly accredited schools which have appropriate vocational courses. This type of training can be for periods up to a maximum of two years and the length of the course will vary with the type of skill that is being developed. In cases where the trainee is a family man, we make arrangements for his dependents to accompany him and live with him while he is in training. During the past year training of this kind has been provided both in the cities where we have relocation offices and in other communities closer to the reservations. Altogether about 450 Indian trainees have been enrolled.

The second phase of the program this past year has been on-the-job training. As the name implies this involves training the Indians in plants where courses of this kind have been established and approved. In most cases this is a shorter type of training than the institutional kind--usually about 13 weeks--and it is intended to lead directly into a job in the particular plant. Right now the Bureau has contracts for on-the-job training with these 11 plants I have already mentioned and about 140 Indians have benefited from this phase of the program in the first year of operations. The training has been in a wide range of industrial fields such as electronics, garment manufacturing, furniture manufacturing and upholstery, building house trailers, veneer and plywood production, and several others.

In this first year of operations under the vocational training program our funds have been quite limited and the scope of the program has necessarily been rather modest. For the new fiscal year which began July 1, however, a considerably larger appropriation is available and we are planning a sizeable expansion. In the institutional courses we are expecting that nearly 1,000 Indian enrollees will benefit directly--including, of course, many of those who will carry over in training started during the past fiscal year. Under the on-the-job training phase we are planning to provide for about 500 Indian trainees. And finally we are initiating a third phase of the program, as

authorized in the original law, to provide for apprenticeship training. This will be carried forward in the cities where we have the relocation offices and we are expecting to have about 140 young Indians--both single and family men--enrolled in these apprenticeship courses during the coming 12 months.

Personally I am deeply encouraged that we now have this vocational training program under way and I feel confident that it will produce large and growing benefits for the Indian people in the years ahead. There are, of course, many reasons for the widespread poverty we find so frequently on Indian reservations. But certainly one of the most important and tangible reasons has been the lack of specific job skills--the sheer fact that large numbers of adult Indian people have not been qualified by training for anything but common labor and consequently have had no personal bargaining power whatever in seeking for employment.

The new program is explicitly designed to help correct this situation. Under its auspices hundreds of Indians in the younger age brackets will get the ~~type~~ of training they need to make the difference between bare subsistence wages and a reasonably adequate income, between almost total job insecurity and some measure of protection, between a flat and unpromising future and one that holds some promise of steady advancement and improvement. All of these things are implied in the vocational training program and the long-range results should be tremendously beneficial.

There is, of course, one other phase of our economic development work which was discussed in my speech of three years ago and which I could bring up to date on this occasion. That is our relocation services program. However, I am deliberately going to limit my comments on this subject because I feel sure that it will be amply covered in your workshop sessions. And I might add, parenthetically, that I am delighted about this particular workshop and pleased that our Relocation Chief, Mr. Charles Miller, has been here to take an active part in your discussions.

As for my own comments, I just want to emphasize three main points that seem to stand out when we review the record of the relocation service program over the past six years. One of these is that the program has been meeting a definitely felt need of the Indian people. Consistently throughout the period we have had a backlog of applications for relocation assistance; never have we been able to keep up completely with the volume of such requests. Secondly, our own staff people in relocation both at the agencies and in the city offices have gradually been acquiring know-how and expertness in this rather unusual and highly challenging work. Over the years they have learned by trial and error which kinds of techniques are most effective in helping Indian people to become satisfactorily adjusted and which ones simply will not work. Today I feel sure that they are doing a better job than ever.

The third point I want to emphasize has to do with the rather fundamental question of skills and education. Over the past six years I feel certain that we have been providing relocation assistance very largely to the better educated and more skilled members of the population on the reservations. Veterans of World War II and Korea and other Indians who have had considerable experience off the reservations or who have acquired specific job skills have naturally been among the first to come forward in seeking relocation assistance. Today I suspect that the great bulk of people in these categories who have any interest in relocation have already made the move. So we are getting down to a level of people who are very largely without specific job skills and, in many cases, without very much even in the way of ordinary schooling. This means, of course, that we will be facing a considerably more difficult and challenging job than ever before in helping these people to find suitable employment either in the relocation cities or in the near vicinity of the reservations. And it also points up the extreme importance of the vocational training program.

So much by way of a progress report covering generally the period of the last three years. Now I would like to discuss with you the question which I mentioned at the beginning of this speech. To spell it out a bit more, let me remind you that Federal appropriations for programs to benefit the Indian people through the Indian Bureau and the Public Health Service are now running at the level of approximately \$150,000,000 a year. Over the years since the reservation system was first established, many millions and even hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on programs to improve the Indians' health, to provide them with education, and to help them in protecting and making effective use of their lands and other resources. Now the question that arises is why, after all these many years and these continuing and increasing expenditures for programs of assistance, do we still have a so-called "Indian problem" in the United States today.

One reason, of course, is the fact that Indian populations have been growing, in some cases above the national average, until today the tribal population in almost every instance has outgrown its basic land resource. Another and equally important reason in my opinion is to be found in past governmental policy and in the position taken by some groups having what we might call a "professional" interest in Indian affairs. For too many years in the past the Federal policy was one of straight paternalism and the effect was to make the Indians believe that the Government would forever take care of them and that there was no particular necessity to prepare themselves for an independent status. Only in comparatively recent years have we been emphasizing the importance of programs to prepare the Indians for assuming the obligations as well as the benefits that go with their status as American citizens. Obviously, we cannot blame the Indians for past deficiencies of Federal policy; under the circumstances, we cannot blame them for their past failure to assume initiative and responsibility.

Over and beyond this, the Indian morale has been further weakened, in my estimation, by the groups which have been constantly stressing that Indians must be kept in a tribal setting, that they will inevitably fail if they attempt to leave the reservations, and they are basically incapable of competing successfully in the world outside. Personally I have always had more confidence than this in the inherent capabilities of Indian people. For years I have been maintaining that Indians

CAN hold their own with any other element in our population and that there is virtually no limit to what they can accomplish if they are given the same kind of educational advantages and the same kind of opportunities. Today, after nearly five years as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, I believe this more deeply than ever before in my life.

From what I know about the National Fellowship of Indian Workers, I strongly suspect that many of you share my feelings on this and deplore, as I do, the baleful effects of paternalistic Federal policy and paternalistic private thinking. If I am correct in this assumption, then I would urge you to join with us in the Bureau of Indian Affairs as we try to instill in the Indian people--and particularly in the younger generations--a constantly growing confidence in their own abilities and a greater readiness to assume the initiative in developing forward-looking plans and programs. This is a theme which I am continually stressing nowadays in my talks with Indian Bureau personnel. It is one which I hope you will pick up and take back with you in your face-to-face work with the Indian people. As I see it, you have an unparalleled opportunity as religious workers among the Indians to counteract the negativism that has unfortunately grown up in this field and to replace it with positive attitudes squarely oriented toward a brighter and constantly more self-reliant future.

As I look toward that future myself, my attitude is very largely one of optimism and high expectations. Unquestionably there will be setbacks and difficulties in the years ahead for all of us who work with and among the American Indian people. Without them I am sure we can all agree that the jobs we have would not be as interesting and stimulating and challenging as they are. Yet when we look back on the advances that have been achieved just in the three years since your last triennial gathering, it seems to me that the over-all trend in Indian affairs becomes unmistakably clear. It is a trend, as I see it, away from the old attitudes of apathy and isolation and dependency that have for so long permeated and surrounded so much of our Indian population--a trend toward better Indian health, greater Indian educational advantages, and fuller Indian participation in the active economic and political life of the Nation. All of us gathered at this meeting have a part to play in fostering this trend, keeping it alive, keeping it in motion. If all of us will contribute toward this end continuously and to the very best of our individual abilities, then I have every confidence that the forces working for progress in Indian affairs, which have sometimes seemed like such a pitiful trickle in the past, will eventually become a strong and powerful tide that cannot be resisted. I urgently solicit your support and your cooperation in achieving that objective.

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