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JOHN COLLIER TO RECEIVE INTERIOR DEPARTMENT'S HIGHEST AWARD ON 80TH BIRTHDAY

John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1933 to 1945, has been named to receive the Distinguished Service Award, the highest honor the Department of the Interior can bestow. The award will be presented by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Philleo Nash, acting as the personal emissary of Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall, in a ceremony at Mr. Collier's home in Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico, on May 4, his 80th birthday.

The honor, given in recognition of Mr. Collier's extraordinary leadership in the field of Indian affairs, also commemorates the 30th anniversary of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. He was the chief philosopher and advocate of the Indian Reorganization Act, and its passage was an outstanding accomplishment in his career as Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

The 1934 Act is significant in several respects. It brought a quick halt to a process of allotting property to individual Indians which resulted in the permanent loss of much land from Indian ownership. It provided a foundation for tribal economic self-sufficiency by the establishment of chartered corporations, the extension of credit from Federal funds, and the fostering of tribal enterprise. It also brought about home rule through an increased measure of tribal self-government, and established the present-day policies of conservation and development of Indian lands and resources.

The citation to Mr. Collier accompanying the gold medallion reads in part:

"John Collier has always been a vigorous champion of religious freedom, defending the Indians' right to continue their traditional ceremonies and to choose freely among the religions offered them.

"During his years as Commissioner, he fostered the Indians' pride in their cultural heritage.... He emphasized Indian elementary education in day schools rather than boarding schools, and thus contributed to stronger family and community life.

"With others he sought the establishment of the Indian Claims Commission, a tribunal unique in American jurisprudence, before which Indian groups can seek redress for injustices of the past.

"Collier's interest in Indian welfare extends to the entire hemisphere. He was the leading spirit in the creation of the Inter-American Indian Institute, an organization devoted to Indian betterment, established in 1940 by the agreement of twenty-one governments of all the Americas."

Almost all of Collier's adult life has been devoted to work with underprivileged and socially neglected groups. Following attendance at Columbia University and the College de France, in Paris, he became a staff member of the People's Institute in New York, an organization dedicated to helping immigrant and working men. He later served as civic secretary of the organization and editor of its newspaper, The Civic Journal. While holding this position, he helped to organize the National Board of Censorship which later developed into the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, and co-authored a book The City Where Crime is Play based on field researches in the slum districts of Manhattan, which led to numerous municipal actions. He served as director of the National Training School for Community Centers from 1915 to 1919; and helped to establish and was a board member of the American Child Health Organization. In 1919 he directed community organization for the State of California.

A native of Atlanta, Georgia, Mr. Collier has been a resident of Ranchos de Taos, for the last several years.

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