INTERVIEWEE: ROBERT BENNETT

Interviewer: Joe B. Frantz

Washington, D. C. November 13, 1968

F: This is an interview with Mr. Robert Bennett, who is the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Department of the Interior in his office in Washington, D. C., on November 13, 1968. Joe B. Frantz is the interviewer.

Commissioner Bennett, would you identify yourself for us at the outset? I gather you have been Indian Commissioner longer than anyone in the history of the service.

B: I have been the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for over two and a half years, and this exceeds the record of some twenty-six months by the only other Commissioner of Indian Affairs who was of Indian blood. He was Major Eli Parker, who was on the staff of General Grant. It also happens that I am the first career public servant to hold the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs, having started out in the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1933.

F: Where are you from originally?

B: I'm originally from Oneida, Wisconsin, which is a small Indian community near Green Bay, Wisconsin. My association with Indian affairs goes back to the time I was a student in a government boarding school at Haskell Institute, Lawrence, Kansas, from which I graduated in 1931.

F: As a personal note, did you know Frank Medina?

B: I was a classmate of Frank Medina's, and I know him very well. As a matter of fact, we still correspond.

F: Frank is a good friend of mine. Then after finishing Haskell Institute, did you go with the government?

B: Yes. I've spent some thirty-six years now with the government, most of it with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in various locations. The only time I wasn't in the Bureau of Indian Affairs was when I was in the Marine Corps during World War II, and also when I spent some time with the Veterans Administration in Arizona outlining training programs for Indian veterans of that state.

F: And you became a commissioner then when?

B: April 27, 1966, I was sworn in as Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

F: Have there been a number of Commissioners of Indian Affairs who have Indian blood?

B: No, I'm only the second one in the history of Indian Affairs and the first one in a hundred years.

F: The Bureau of Indian Affairs though goes back nearly to the start of this country, doesn't it?

B: Yes, it does. For a time it was in the military department and then in about 1824, it was transferred to the civilian agency. It has been in existence since that time.

F: Well, to get down to our topic, have you had a personal relationship with President Johnson either in his pre-Presidential days or since he has become President with regard to Indian Affairs?

B: It has only been since Mr. Johnson has become President. My swearing-in ceremony took place in the White House. He has taken a real active interest in Indian affairs in terms of the relationship between the federal

government and Indian tribes. Mrs. Johnson likewise has had an extreme personal interest because of her concern for some of the, you might say, beauty which exists in some of the Indian country, particularly in the Southwest and Northwest, and she has visited many of these Indian areas.

F: Have you been with her on any of these trips?

B: I have not been with her, although the Secretary of the Interior and members of my staff have been with her on these trips. I have been with the President on several occasions, particularly when he has had signing ceremonies in connection with Indian legislation.

F: Were these held at the White House or somewhere around the particular--?

B: All of those which I attended were held at the White House.

I also would like to mention that President Johnson is the only President in history who sent a special message on Indian affairs to Congress.

F: I was going to come to that. We may as well get into that now. What is the background of this devotion of a complete message to Congress?

B: Well, as I stated before, he always has had a keen personal interest in Indian affairs, and he felt that all of the agencies of government were not doing as much as they could for the Indian citizens leaving it all up to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He started off in outlining this policy in a general way when I was sworn in as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, when he stated that the commitment of the federal government to the Indian people was not just through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, it was a total federal commitment involving all of the agencies of the federal government. And he challenged all of the agencies of the federal government to begin to make their programs meaningful to Indian people.

Consequently, there is now in the Office of Economic Opportunity an Indian desk; there is also an Indian desk in the Economic Development Administration which is in the Department of Commerce; and an Indian desk has been set up in the Manpower Training Division of the Department of Labor; and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has also set up a center for Indian progress. Further, the Department of Agriculture has proposed legislation to amend their general authority for giving extension services in rural areas to include specifically Indian tribes. That department is going to make a special effort to make their programs meaningful to Indian people.

So I think that following this challenge made by the President at my swearing-in ceremony, the various departments of the government are responding. This, of course, has been followed by the President's special message on March 6 of this year, which as I indicated is the only special message that has ever gone to the Congress on American Indians by a President of the United States.

F: Had you known the President previous to being named the commissioner?

B: No, I had not known the President previous to being named commissioner, and my association with him has been primarily through Mr. Stewart Udall, the Secretary of the Interior.

F: I presume it was Mr. Udall who recommended you to the President?

B: Yes, it was Mr. Udall who recommended me, and this grows out of the President's policy of trying to find career people to head up various programs of the federal government. As you know, Mr. Johnson has felt for some time that in some of these programs, it is better to have career

people head up the programs rather than political appointees; and it just so happened that I was selected from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to become the commissioner.

F: Were there any problems of confirmation?

B: No, there weren't any problems as far as I personally was concerned. The Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs did have some pretty definite ideas of some of the things they would like to see accomplished so that there were some discussions with the committee, more on policy than on myself personally, and I was recommended unanimously by the committee and confirmed unanimously by the Senate.

F: On this message this past March 1968, was your office consulted by the White House before the President issued the message?

B: Oh, yes. We had received indications some time before that the President was very much interested in sending up a special message on Indian Affairs; and the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior provided most of (the) information to the Executive Office for the development of the message.

F: Where do you think he got the idea of devoting a whole message to Indian Affairs?

B: I think just out of his concern for people. And as you know he has been concerned with the Indian minority, Mexican-American minority; he has mentioned the problems of the Mexican-Americans in connection with migrant work, and I think just out of this grew a desire to try and be helpful for the American Indian minority.

F: Yours has been a quite full administration. Let's get down to some of it.

For instance, there has been a complete turn-around, as I gather in this matter of Indian termination policy.

B: Yes, there has. This was stated first of all by the President when he gave emphasis to the developmental aspects of his policy, both in terms of human and resource development as far as the Indians were concerned. He became quite explicit about the termination policy in his special message of March 6. Prior to that he had also stated to Secretary (John) Gardner of Health, Education, and Welfare that he was opposed to unilateral termination, and this message was given to over three hundred tribal representatives in the national meeting in Kansas City in February 1967. So all throughout his public announcements, he has taken this position. This has since been followed, you know, by the passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 11, introduced by Senator McGovern of South Dakota, who is chairman of the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs. This resolution states the sense of Congress also is that there must be programs developed by and with the Indian people for their development and less concern be given to any kind of policy which would unilaterally terminate the federal government's responsibilities to Indian people.

F: Well, now approximately two decades ago there was enough popular thinking along this line that Congress did establish a policy of unilateral termination. Why do you think you had this switch?

B: Well, I think because the whole political climate has changed since 1950. I think that if such a policy were being considered in Congress today in the light of the responsibility which the nation feels to various disadvantaged groups, such a resolution as MR108 would not pass the Congress. The

fact that Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 11 was passed, which is almost in opposition to Resolution 108 of the 1950's, indicates that there is a change in the whole national political climate.

F: Now, what does this envision to the person of the future--what is going to happen?

B: Well, I think the President outlined a sort of very broad blueprint in his special message when he stated that the kind of relationship he wanted to see between the federal government and Indian people is one of partnership, in working at their various problems which would include the participation and the thinking and decisions of the Indian people, along with the resources that the federal government and other governmental agencies have to offer. And I interpret this partnership to mean one in which the people in the federal government sit down and work with Indian people because they want to and not because they have to. And I think once we get this kind of spirit in terms of our relationship with the Indian people that with Indian leadership playing a vital role progress will be accelerated.

F: Previous to this, the idea had been for the federal government to withdraw as a partner. Is that correct?

B: During the policies of the 1950's, it was a program which was also entitled, in addition to terminating the trusteeship, the withdrawal of services from Indian people. And history has proven that in many areas where services have been withdrawn, the local community has not been able to step in and provide the services formerly provided by the federal government. But I think, again referring back to the changed national political climate brought about largely by the policies of President Johnson,

the federal government is helping local communities to provide services for their citizens all over the country, not only just for Indians but for everybody. So it is within this context, I believe, that it has been possible to bring about the change in the policy with respect to Indians.

F: Do you work with the Indian claims problems?

B: Yes, we work with the Indian claims problems. We have certain specific responsibilities. One of these specific responsibilities is, of course, to furnish all of the available information that we have to the tribes and their attorneys. We also have a responsibility to make loans to tribes who do not have the financing to develop information in support of their claims. The Claims Commission also asks for our recommendations whenever there are any compromise settlements between the United States and the tribes. We have to furnish a social-economic report on all tribes who win claims to the Congress before Congress authorizes the expenditure of the money by the tribe. And we also have to make our recommendations to the Congress as to the best method usually through planning with tribes in which any monies awarded to the tribes should be distributed.

F: Well, now, when the Indian Claims Commission delivers a case to the Court of Claims, what is the precedure?

B: When the Indian Claims Commission makes a decision, or the Court of Claims makes a decision, they furnish a report to the Congress of the United States and to the Treasury. The Treasury then requests an appropriation by Congress to pay the claim. When Congress makes this appropriation, the money is deposited in the Treasury of the United States to the credit of the tribe at 4% simple interest. Thereafter it is not

available for expenditure until authorized by Congress. This means that the tribe, in cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, has to come up with a program which is presented to the Congress, and Congress then authorizes the use of funds usually for whatever program purposes that may be requested by the tribe.

F: Have you had any instances of Congress reneging on a Claims Commission recommendation?

B: No, there have been no instances of Congress reneging on a Claims Commission award. There have been some discussions as to what possibly might be the best use the tribe might make of their money, but there is no case that I know of where any payment of a claim has been withheld by the Congress.

F: Have you established a formula for the tribe's use of the money that is awarded, or is this worked out by the individual tribe?

B: This is generally worked out by the individual tribes; however, our preference and the preference of most of the tribes is that a certain proportion of the money be available for investment purposes; while others--

F: Investment in what?

B: Well, this could be investment in businesses; it could be investment in the purchase of land; it could be any income-producing investment of any kind. And then we all know that with the economic situation on most of the reservations, particularly those in isolated areas, there is need for immediate expenditures in the way of housing and improvements of this kind.

Most of the tribes also have a great concern about higher education, and a great many of the tribes set up either actual scholarship funds or in some cases trust funds to support a scholarship program for higher education.

F: Has the introduction of new claims about reached its peak, or did you envisage a continuing group of claimants?

B: The time for the filing of claims under the Claims Commission Act of 1947 has expired.

F: The Claims Commission was extended at one time--

B: The Claims Commission has been extended several times, the most recent being five years from April 1967; but while the time of the Claims Commission has been extended, the time for filing claims has not been extended. The life of the Claims Commission has been extended to take care of the business brought about by the filing of claims prior to the time limit set in the Claim Commission Act; so that if there are any future claims that any tribe has against the United States, these can only be pursued if they get special authorization or what they call a jurisdictional act from the Congress.

F: Can you give me approximately the total that has been awarded to date?

B: It runs a little over 315 million dollars. I think one of the first claims awarded was one of the largest, and it was $32,000,000 to the Confederated Bands of Ute of Utah and Colorado. Some of the most recent awards which have been quite substantial are $15,000,000 to the Cheyenne and Arapaho of Western Oklahoma; $6,000,000 to the Spokane tribe of Washington. And so the individual awards range from four or five thousand dollars on up to the $32,000,000 for the Ute Indian tribes.

F: It seems to me that there is a popular misconception that you think of Indians as all being in the trans-Mississippi west. You do have a considerable concern with Indians to the east of the Mississippi, do you not?

B: Yes, we do. Of course, there are those in Wisconsin, in Michigan east of the Mississippi, and then we have the substantial groups with which we are heavily involved--these are the Choctaw Indians of Mississippi; the Eastern Cherokee of North Carolina; and the Seminole and Miccasukeas of Florida. We do have a limited kind of relationship with some of the five nations of New York also.

F: What effect has the Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction Act of 1953 had on your policy in the Indian Bureau?

B: Well, the Indian tribes have never been in favor of the extension of the civil and criminal jurisdiction of states over Indian reservations, and they have fought constantly since the enactment of this legislation to have it amended to provide for a consent feature, which would mean that the state could not extend civil or criminal jurisdiction over an Indian tribe unless it was with the consent of the tribe.

In the recent so-called Open Housing or Civil Rights Act of 1968, this was included; so the way the Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction Act now stands as amended it does require consent of the tribe for the extension of state criminal and civil jurisdiction. It also provides that where states have assumed, or were given this jurisdiction by the 1953 act, they can retrocede their jurisdiction or the Tribes can request retrocession. So I think the tribes feel they have won a great political victory as a result of

getting a consent provision made a part of the Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction Act.

F: Now the two civil rights acts of 1964 and the one of 1968 have both been thought of by the public as being primarily a concern with Negro and Mexican-Americans, but both of them had considerable significance for the Indian, did they not?

B: Yes, both civil rights acts have had considerable significance for the Indians. We have a procedure set up between the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice where we report directly to the United States Attorney any instances where we feel that the civil rights of Indian people have been violated.

Also the Civil Rights Act of 1968 attempts to protect the civil rights of Indians as against their own tribal government and their own judicial system. We do not know what the full effects of this legislation will be. We have had some seminars with Indian groups throughout the country, and we will be having some detailed training sessions with them, so that the tribal governments and their judicial systems will not be in conflict with the civil rights acts as we understand them.

F: I was going to ask you--is there a gray area still to be worked out between tribal regulations and federal regulations?

B: Yes, there is definitely a gray area to be worked out between tribal law and order codes and the provisions of the new civil rights act; and we are also required by the act to present to the Congress a model code which is to be followed by the Indian tribes in its administration of justice. But there are many problems to be worked out in this, and we look upon it as being a very tremendous training responsibility on our part, more than one,

you might say, of beginning to throw the book at the tribes and their law and order programs. So the approach that we are taking is the training approach, and we think that in time there will be compliance by all of the groups with the intent, if not the letter, of the civil rights act.

The one group that has some real basic problems with it, of course, is the Pueblos of New Mexico.

F: How does that happen?

B: This happens because they do not have a democratic form of government; their form of government is a theocracy, where there is administration selection of the civil rules by the religious leaders or the cacique. And so you, in effect, have a kind of conflict because on the one hand there was an international treaty guaranteeing to the Pueblos their own system of government and religious freedom with their system of government based on religion, and now we are taking away their form of government through the civil rights act which guarantees certain rights to individual members of the group.

But the Pueblo people, as a people, believe in the civil rights of the individual, but it is going to take a much longer time to get this worked out with the Pueblo groups than--

F: You're probably going to have some litigation before you're through.

B: I think that there isn't any question but that there will be some.

F: Have you tested this lack of separation of church and state in the case of the Pueblo Indians yet?

B: All the attempts to test it so far have not received the attention of the courts because the federal courts have always decided they lacked

jurisdiction to interfere in the internal affairs of the tribe, particularly where they are protected by an international treaty. So no one has been able to get into court to challenge the separation of church and state in the government of the Pueblos. Whether they will be able to get into court now under the Civil Rights Act remains to be seen, but up to now, as I have stated, the federal court has refused to interfere in the internal affairs of a tribe, particularly where their system of government has been guaranteed by an international treaty.

F: The tribe has fused its rights with those of the surrounding community and some Indian has been tried on a criminal offense. Have you had this special attention paid to getting a representative number of Indians on the jury, such as you have with the other minority groups?

B: Yes, this is receiving more attention all the time, and it is being given more attention by the local authorities. I think that everyone is certainly aware now more than ever before not only of legislation but Supreme Court decisions relating to the rights of individuals, and I think all of the enforcement agencies throughout the country and all of the judicial systems throughout the country are taking judicial notice of this; and so I think that there is considerable improvement in this area.

F: In the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VII dealt among other things with Indian rights for equal employment opportunity. Would you comment on what this has meant?

B: One of the things that has happened in connection with this has been, I believe, increased attention which employers are giving to this particular area. This has been brought to their attention in many areas of Indian

country by the assignment to state employment services of individuals whose concern is equal employment opportunity and also whose concern is the minority group within the states. Approximately 160 people have been added by the United States Employment Service to the staffs of various state employment offices to carry out this particular program, called the Concentrated Employment Program or CEP, to see that there is a matching of Indian individuals and available jobs, plus the enforcement of the Equal Employment Opportunity provisions of the Civil Rights Act.

In connection with that also there has been an increased interest on the part of industry on locating plants on Indian reservations, and over the last four or five years there have been approximately 100 plants located on or near Indian reservations which provide employment opportunity for several thousand Indian people throughout the country.

F: Where the plants are either located on or near a reservation, is there a conscious attempt on the part of the top-level executives to move Indians up into administrative, managerial positions?

B: Yes, there is. This has been discussed usually in the negotiations between the plant officials and the tribal officials with our support. Many of the plants do have training programs right within their plants in which individuals can improve their positions. We also have an on-the-job training program which we operate in connection with the establishment of new plants on Indian reservations to help qualify individuals for various skills. And we do find that there is considerable promotion of Indian people within plants; I believe that some of the personnel policies of these larger companies provide that if they do employ minority groups, they

like to bring in people from the same group as supervisors.

F: Do you have a group of hard-core unemployables the way that some of the other groups do that present a problem in your industrial situation?

B: Yes, we do have a group of hard-core unemployables, and this is primarily caused by the unwillingness of this group of people to leave their home community and go to available jobs which may be, say, relatively close to the reservation or in urban areas many, many miles away.

F: What is this primarily, sentimentality or fear of cutting loose?

B: Well, they just don't want to leave home; and also because they are able to continue to live in their own Indian community. And for this reason we have, together with the employment service, increased our efforts to obtain what we call "within area" placement, rather than taking them away. If there is a family that needed a job and we knew say, there is a job in Los Angeles or Chicago or some other place, our program has been to move that family to where this job is, but because some of these people don't want to leave their area, we are making a more intensive effort to find a job for that individual closer to home which might allow him to commute daily or commute on weekends to his home community. And we have established offices to assist them in such places as Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, and these have proven very successful. There are many people who will take a job that they can commute to either on a daily basis or a weekly basis rather than to go several hundred miles to a larger urban area for employment.

F: Has economic advance and, this is a debatable term--abstract--but, say, quality of life been improved generally by some of the administration

programs which don't deal with Indians per se but with the whole American scene? I'm thinking of things like Medicare. Does this filter down to the Indian, and (does) he become somewhat more secure and more progressive because of it?

B: I would say yes. Along with the administrative policies established by the President, which I referred to here earlier, as you recall, he challenged the federal agencies to make their programs meaningful to Indian people and that the commitment of the federal government was a total commitment of all of the agencies and not just the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Along with that, we have established a legislative policy by which we assure the eligibility of Indian tribes to participate in all of these programs by having them mentioned specifically in legislation, so that when programs such as the Juvenile Delinquency Control Act are authorized whereby the federal government is going to team up with the local community in the prevention of juvenile delinquency, reference is made to states, counties, and political subdivisions and we also have the authorizing legislation (to) include Indian tribes. Therefore, not only by administrative decision but in many cases by the language of the act itself, these programs are made available to Indian tribes.

F: You siad you had a legislative program--how does that work?

B: Well, when authorizing legislation of these kinds of programs is being considered by the Congress, the Secretary then proposes to the committee handling the legislation that Indian tribes be qualified along with states, counties and municipalities.

F: You stay reasonably alert to what is going on in Congress in these sorts of social services or economic services, whatever they may be?

B: Yes, we do. We watch all general legislation of that kind to be sure that Indian tribes are included. And then we also, of course, have specific legislation in certain Indian matters too.

F: Do you work through your Interior Committee in the two houses or do you work with the specific committee that is considering the legislation?

B: On all Indian legislation we work through our substantive committees of the Interior and Insular Affairs, both in the House and in the Senate. We also work on certain policy matters in funding, of course, with the Appropriation Committees of both houses. When other committees are considering broad, general legislation, we go directly to these committees with our recommendations. Quite often, the committees themselves refer broad legislative matters to the Department of the Interior for its comments, and this provides us an opportunity to make recommendations.

F: You have had a conscious policy of upgrading health services to the Indians, have you not--of building hospitals and staffing them and trying to give a better grade of health service generally than has been the case in the past?

B: Yes, as you know, in 1953 the jurisdiction for health programs of Indians was transferred from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the Division of Indian Health, which has its national offices out in Silver Spring, Maryland. The Division of Indian Health is under the Public Health Service in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare; and I know Dr. Rabeau, who was the director of Indian Health. There has certainly been a very real effort in many health areas so that there has been an appreciable decline in infant mortality under the new programs; further, there has been a

special program authorized for sanitation, Public Law 121, under which the tribe and the Public Health Service developed water and sewer project in Indian communities. There is a strong emphasis also on the education of community health people, people who will be able to orient individuals in the local Indian communities toward better sanitation, better nutrition, and better health care.

There also, of course, has been an upgrading of the facilities and personnel in the Division of Indian Health, so I think there have been some real strides made in improved health services. Much of this program comes about through recommendations made by the National Indian Health Advisory Board, which is made up of public citizens, including Indians, with whom the Division of Indian Health meets. We also meet with them on a regular basis on many mutual problems of concern to both of us, and we find that these meetings are very successful and very informative; and quite often, both Dr. Rabeau and I issue joint statements of policy and agreement following these coordinated meetings.

F: Has the Indian life expectancy rate run even with or behind the general population of the United States?

B: It has run considerably behind, but there has been a marked improvement in life expectancy.

F: Within the past decade?

B: Within the past decade, that is correct. Most of the health problems, I believe, are of an environmental nature. By working together with the Division of Indian Health in improving the environment for Indian people, I am sure that much of their health problems can be eliminated. I believe

that Indian people still have many illnesses which the general population doesn't have any more because of improved environment. With the sanitation program, with the health service, and with their improved housing and improved economic standard, we believe that we can eliminate many of these causes of illness.

F: Other than your own personal energy and imagination, is there some routine or some established method of coordination of these various Indian services between the several departments here in Washington?

B: Yes, there is a means to accomplish this. Mr. Johnson, again in his special message, pointed out that he felt that there was this lack of coordination between the various departments, and since he of course is against any waste in government or loss of efficiency, he established under the Vice President the National Council on Indian Opportunity. This is made up of six Cabinet people and the director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, plus six national Indian leaders. This council almost has Cabinet status; and one of their main functions is to be a coordinating force of all of the efforts being made at the federal level on behalf of Indians. Also this council has been given certain specific responsibilities to make recommendations to the President for policy--

F: This was established by Executive Order?

B: This was established by Executive Order the day following the President's special message of March 6. And the Vice President has given the six Indian members special areas of responsibility, and each of these Indian leaders will be chairing various aspects of the Indian problem. Mrs. LaDonna Harris is the chairman on the Off-Reservation or Urban Indians,

and she is starting a series of meetings next week, beginning with a meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This meeting will be held on November 22 and November 23. She will then have meetings in other larger urban areas to become acquainted with the problems that these people have.

The President did single out this group of Indian people as needing special attention in his special message of March 6.

F: Does Mrs. Harris have Indian blood?

B: Yes, she's an enrolled member of the Comanche tribe of Oklahoma and, as you may know, the wife of Senator Fred Harris of Oklahoma.

F: Oh, yes, I was thinking of another. Sure, I realize what a help she has been to him in Oklahoma. I was thinking of another Mrs. Harris.

Has this council been established long enough for you to get some idea of how it's going to work?

B: No, it hasn't. One of the reasons, of course, has been (that) the Vice President himslef has been so busy in his own campaign efforts. Prior to that, their original organizational meeting was set for the same day that Senator Kennedy was assassinated, so this caused another delay.

F: You've had hard luck all the way round, haven't you?

B: So they are, you might say, just now beginning to get off the ground really.

F: Is it firmly enough established, you think, that a change in the Administration will make no difference?

B: I don't think that a change in administrations will make any difference, because there has to be a coordinating agency of all of these efforts some place. And I think the President has established a good vehicle by which this can come about; particularly not only does it involve representatives of various departments, but it involves the Indian leadership, too, who I

think should have a hand in the coordination of services being made available to them.

F: Other than a sort of psychological shove, does the Administration give any incentive to industry to establish plants on tribal lands?

B: The one incentive that they do have, of course, is the training programs offered by the federal government. Another incentive is that if the capital investment is made by the tribes, this of course is not taxable, because this is real property held in a trust status by the Secretary of the Interior. So there is a tax incentive also in connection with some of the plants located on the reservations.

F: Have you had much establishment in the way of tribal ownership plants?

B: We have several methods by which industry comes on Indian reservations. One is a proposal by which the tribe constructs plants to the specifications of the industry. These plants are then leased to the industry so that the tribe within five to ten years gets its investment back. There are other ways in which this is accomplished also, such as the company building the building itself under a long-time lease with the tribe, and then the tribe may then make a loan to the company for the equipment or machinery.

Then there is another way, and that is where the company may establish the plant and bring in their machinery and then the tribe may make an operating loan to the company. So there are any number of ways by which the tribe and the industry negotiate agreements whereby industry becomes established on Indian reservations.

F: Has there been any attempt to establish either state or federally chartered banks with tribal ownerships?

B: Yes, there is a bank on the Navajo reservation in which the Navajo tribe has an interest.

F: How is this working?

B: This is working quite well. I think there were some problems in the overall management, but this wasn't at the local tribal level; this had to do with some other problems of the holding company.

F: This is sort of a routine problem any bank could have?

B: Yes, this is true. And this is the only one where a tribe has a financial interest in a bank. Other banks, however, are becoming very interested in Indian reservations and several are beginning to establish branches out on Indian reservations. In addition to that, since I have been commissioner, I have used an authority of the Secretary, and that is with the approval of the tribes, to take substantial sums of money out of the Treasury of the United States where it is drawing simple interest at 4% and putting these funds, properly secured in banks under Certificates of Deposits, where we have interest earnings as high as $7\frac{1}{2}\%$.

As a consequence of this during the past last fiscal year, we earned an additional $1,000,000 of interest for various tribes throughout the country.

F: Good. Have you reached that stage yet where an Indian can get personal loans on just about the same basis that the non-Indians can?

B: Yes, the credit standing of Indians is improving all of the time. And more and more loans are being made to individual Indians and tribes by private lenders. We work with the tribes and the banks in working out various kinds of loan agreements, and also with the individuals.

Trust property owned by individual Indians can be mortgaged to secure loans from private lenders.

F: Are banks fairly good about developmental loans?

B: Yes, they are. I think they are more concerned with the developmental type of loans than they are with other kinds such as a personal loan, because they naturally have an interest in the economy of the region being built up. They have seen these large undeveloped resources owned by Indians and since I have been commissioner, we have changed the policy from that of just being a trustee or custodian to that of being a developer. We want to see these resources developed and bring some returns to the Indian owners rather than just to "protect" them for the benefit of the Indian people.

F: Is the White House aware of your change along this line?

B: Oh, yes. Here again in addition to the human development in which the President exhibited a real personal interest, he did state that the resources that the Indian people owned needed to be developed to bring a maximum return to the Indian people, because he felt that the economy generated there would be a contributing resource available to the Indians in settling some of their other problems.

F: What kind of plants are established on the tribal lands?

B: You might say we have all kinds. We have furniture plants, electronic component plants of various kinds; one of the largest ones is the Fairchild Semi-Conductor Plant on the Navajo reservation which employs 1200 people and as soon as they move into additional quarters being constructed by the tribe, their employment is expected to go up to 1600. Also, General Dynamics recently put a plant on the Navajo reservation which employs 200.

We have some carpet manufacturing plants in western Oklahoma which are doing very well; we have furniture-making plants on various reservations. And the electronic component plants do real well in terms of high production. The tests have shown that Indian people, and these include men as well as women, test very high in manual dexterity, hand and eye coordination, and they have a very high patience tolerance. So that even the men can do bench work hour after hour and do the same operation over and over again with very high quality production.

So, all in all, we think that this has been a very successful program, and we have many testimonials from these manufacturers about the quality of work being done by their Indian employees.

F: Is there any general tribal attitude toward trade unionization?

B: The general tribal attitude is opposed to trade unionization at this time.

F: Does this make any difference in your relationships with these companies--I'm thinking of the larger companies like Fairchild that come in?

B: Not necessarily. We do have some problems with some of the trades, but generally speaking in talking with the union leadership, they are just as concerned as anyone else that the economy of Indian people be upgraded. I think there isn't any question but as time goes along and the Indian people's economy becomes upgraded and establishment of large industries becomes more or less a way of life in Indian country there necessarily will be union involvement.

F: Trade union leadership at this juncture wants them to get to be workers first and--?

B: Yes, they, like everybody else, want the Indians to get on their feet first rather than just being concerned with them as union members.

F: Have there been significant changes in land ownership and leasing for Indians?

B: There have been some significant changes because we are concerned now with the development of Indian resources, and we are going in for developmental kinds of leases and programs more than being concerned with immediate cash return. In the past because we were concerned with immediate cash return which we sometimes did not feel was sufficient for certain resources, the resources have lain there twenty and thirty years without development. We are now taking a deeper look at the returns to the tribe, not only in terms of cash return but other benefits such as jobs and the attraction of other businesses because of the developmental type program. And with this in mind, we have changed our attitude and are going in for more development leases. In long-term leases, our recommendation to the tribes is that they get what we call a "piece of the action." We don't like to see them just turn over the raw resource to some developer for ninety-nine years, out of which they get a little money each month or each year; we'd rather see the Tribes participate as partners.

In some cases, as indicated by the pictures I have in the office here of a winter ski resort of The Mescalero Apache, and then this summer resort here on the Warm Springs Reservation, these are totally-owned tribal facilities.

F: I'm from Texas, you know, and we're quite aware what the Mescaleros have done out there; they actually made a ski resort where there wasn't one.

B: Yes. So we are very much interested in the tribes' developing and being owner of these resources, and we hope they can attract more and more

investment capital and there can be an expanded effort along this line.

F: Has the Federal Highway and Road Aid Act of 1964 had any impact on the Indian's life?

B: It has had some impact, but not as much as we would like. The impact of a good highway system, I think, is quite evident by what happened on the Navajo reservation. Under the Navajo-Hopi Rehabilitation Act, there was a special authorization for construction of roads across the Navajo reservation. This has opened up the area and the tourist traffic is increasing; it has helped the economy of the people; and it has enabled the people to get out so we can have better schools and consolidated high schools that we can take the children to by buses as distinguished from taking them from their homes and putting them in a boarding school far removed from home. And so this road program has really opened up the Navajo country. We would like to see this extended into other Indian areas.

The President is also aware of this because again in his special message of March 6, he recommended an increase of $10,000,000 per year in the authorization for construction of highways on Indian reservations. And the last Congress, in their Highway Authorization Act for the next two years, did include an additional $10,000,000 each year for Indian highways. So we have the authorization. Now I hope we can get the money to expand our road construction program in Indian country.

F: Do you have difficulty with the sort of professional and amateur conservationists who don't want to injure a way of life?

B: Oh, yes. We have a lot of interested groups and individuals in Indian affairs, some of whom have had an association in Indian affairs for a long, long time. We have worked with them and tribes have worked with them.

Of course, the cornerstone of the present policy is that since the Indian people and Indian tribes own the property and we are the trustees, we are guided by what they want to do with respect to their property. So we suggest to these interest groups that they work out whatever problems they have with the Indian tribes and Indian owners.

Of course, one of the problems that is now appearing in Indian Affairs is what I call the new discoverers of Indians, people who for the first time are discovering Indians, and of course have all kinds of ideas and panaceas for everything. Unfortunately, some of them bring their panaceas and ideas here to Washington and try to get them through the various departments in government or through Congress without the knowledge of the Indians. My advice to them is that they should go to the Indian people first with their ideas and panaceas.

F: What are some of the ideas?

B: Oh, some of the ideas are that, for instance, the Indian should have his freedom and they don't specify what they mean by Indians having their freedom. In those cases, I point out that the individual Indians are free; Indian tribes can, at any time they wish, come to Congress and ask for legislation to change the trust relationship between them and the Congress; and I'm sure Congress would oblige them.

And others are concerned with the kind of education program that Indian people are receiving, and some of them recommend as a panacea that if you take BIA School No. 2 off the door and nail up Public School No. 6, that all the problems will be solved. This, of course, doesn't solve the problems because you have the same child in the same school room

that you had before the sign was changed. And I don't believe that a lot of people realize that we have all of the human, social, economic problems of a people in miniscule with Indians. So a lot of people say, "Why haven't you solved the Indian problem?" If we could solve the Indian problems, we could solve the problems of humanity, because theirs are the problems of humanity. So we, like all other agencies, are working with the people in efforts to solve problems and all problems and their solutions have to be put in historical perspective.

In my discussions with Indian leaders, I say, "Well, if we met today and by five o'clock Friday had all of the problems of your people solved, had all the answers, (on) Monday morning when we came and met, we'd have just as many problems, only they would be different ones."

So we are always accused of not being able to solve the Indian problem. Well, the Indian problem is basically a human problem, and if we could solve the problems of humanity, we'd really be doing something.

F: Is there a strong movement to get Interior out of the sort of schoolkeeping, school teaching business?

B: Yes, there have been several moves recently to get the education function of the Bureau of Indian Affairs transferred; some would like to see it transferred to the Office of Education; some would like to see it transferred to the States; however, the Indian people generally are opposed to any transfer of the education functions from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

F: They think they get better representation there?

B: They believe that they get better representation, and they believe they have more of a voice in educational policies as long as it's in the Bureau of

Indian Affairs than they would have if it was in the State or if it was in the Office of Education.

F: Well, now, you go through state accreditation agencies--what other coordination do you try to maintain between the schools on the Indian lands and the regular public school systems?

B: Well, we do have, of course, state accreditation and we do have our senior high schools accredited by, I believe it's the Northwest Association of Schools or similar accrediting agency. Graduates from all of our high schools are acceptable in the public colleges throughout the country. And we offer what we call a comprehensive training program, one which gives all of the academic requirements necessary to go on to higher education, and one which also enables the student to explore other fields, so that possibly when he finishes high school, he may elect to go to a vocational school or some other training beyond high school rather than college.

F: Has there been any change in the government's attitude during the past half-dozen years toward the handling of Indian trust lands?

B: Oh, yes. There is considerable change in the government's attitude. First of all, since the Indian people owned (the) property, much more weight is given to their wishes and to their decisions. As you know, the trustee relationship is such that the Indian owners cannot encumber their property in any way without our consent. Neither can the government encumber the property of Indian people without the consent of the owner. So most of the decisions that are made are joint decisions. And more and more the decision of the tribe and other property owners are given more weight than it was in the past in arriving at decisions with respect to

their property.

Further we are engaged now in a review of all of the authorities, so that as much authority as can be handled at the local level can be delegated. This eliminates many of the transactions which formerly had to be approved by the Secretary. (They are) now approved by the Secretary's representative right on the reservation. So there has been many delegations of authority from the Secretary to me; from me to our area director; and then from the area directors to the local administrator.

F: Trying to get more and more decentralization?

B: More and more decentralization so that the decision-making can be more timely and more responsive to Indian wishes. Then the function of area offices--one of their functions, and as well as this office, becomes one of deciding on appeals from the local decision.

F: Does this inability to encumber land stir the reformers that this is a denial of freedom to get in debt?

B: Yes, some of them are quite concerned about it. However, the Indians are very happy with it. Indian individuals can mortgage their individual land with the consent of the local administrator, but we attempted last year to get general authorizations so that the tribes could mortgage their resources to get investment capital. And the Indian tribes throughout the country were unanimous in their opposition to their having this kind of authority.

F: Does the development of these vast federal water projects take into consideration Indian rights, and are there any peculiar benefits that accrue to the Indians?

other kinds of benefits which they think will be more lasting than just a cash payment for whatever rights they have had.

F: Where you have your Indian either on submarginal land or a depressed area, or maybe just a depressed tribal group, do you have a conscious program of both resettlement and rehabilitation?

B: We have a program of resettlement which offers on a voluntary basis opportunities for employment in other communities and also opportunities for training for employment. These generally are available to the eighteen to thirty-five year age group, and in connection with this we pay all the expenses of moving and of training and of resettlement. But I want to emphasize, of course, this is strictly a voluntary program.

In addition to this program which we have, many Indian people voluntarily remove themselves from less favorable areas into communities where they feel there are better economic and social opportunities. So what we are trying to do is try to offer them as many options as we can. They can have an option, we hope, to stay in their home community with an adequate job, decent housing, and so forth; and they can also have an option to take themselves into any communities of the country, wherever their destiny takes them.

F: In September you made a speech in Omaha in which you spoke of the fact that in these past several years the Indian was reaching a sort of new plateau in his search for identity, and also had improved his tribal organization. I wonder if you could elaborate on those two things.

B: I think with the present political climate of the country and as the attitude of people toward one another changes in the country, the Indian people have seen the opportunity to do something they've wanted to do for a long

B: Generally, the political attitude of the Indians has been in opposition to much of this development. And it's because of their attitude toward land, which is more than an economic one--they have more than an economic concern about their land; it's tied into their tradition, their religion and so forth.

F: Historic and sentimental regard?

B: That is true. So they have generally been opposed, and of course under the Constitution of the United States, it has been well-established that through eminent domain the federal government can take these lands with payment of adequate compensation.

In addition to the payment of compensation, the government has also felt an additional responsibility of providing additional funds for the rehabilitation of the tribe affected by the taking of these lands. So this generally has been the pattern except we have changed our role in the last couple of years. One is that the Bureau of Indian Affairs no longer acts as an agent of the federal government to obtain any lands from Indians or to obtain their consent on projects. We are now the advocates of Indian people so that if a federal agency wants Indian land for a certain purpose and the Indian tribe is opposed, we take our position alongside of the Indian people and we oppose it, too. And eventually a decision is made on it.

Further, we advise the Indian tribes not only to take cash, but here again to get other benefits which will mean more than cash. Consequently, like the Big Horn Dam on the Crow reservation, the Crow took a lot of the commercial recreation rights in addition to cash. And other tribes are taking land rather than all cash or asking for land on the lakeshore and

other kinds of benefits which they think will be more lasting than just a cash payment for whatever rights they have had.

F: Where you have your Indian either on submarginal land or a depressed area, or maybe just a depressed tribal group, do you have a conscious program of both resettlement and rehabilitation?

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B: I think with the present political climate of the country and as the attitude of people toward one another changes in the country, the Indian people

have seen the opportunity to do something they've wanted to do for a long time, and that is to assert themselves as a group and as a distinct group. You find that even though they are carried by circumstances into large areas--here again, they congregate together. And in the city of Los Angeles alone, I don't believe there's a weekend goes by all summer that there isn't a big Indian ceremonial or powwow thing in one of the public parks in the city of Los Angeles.

The Indian people, as I analyze it, seek several things. One, they seek their own identity as Indian people. And you'll find in Indian country that there are more ceremonials and there are more powwows, if you want to call them that, going on than ever before. There is more participation, particularly by younger Indians, than ever before. And I think even the costuming is being upgraded. You don't see any bedraggled feathers or old pieces of costumes like you used to see. They're coming back real strong.

And then, secondly, is their tribal identification. They want to be identified as an Indian individual and with a tribal group. Now, this is the one thing, I think, that eventually every person will have to understand in connection with the relationship between the Indian tribe and the Indian government. In addition to whatever commitments the Indian people feel the federal government has made to them, the Indian people also want just as much recognition by the federal government that they are the Seneca nation, the Navajo tribe, or the White Mountain Apaches. They want the federal government to say to them and recognize, "You are the White Mountain Apaches," or "You are." Whatever may be the future relationship

from a legal point of view between the tribe and the federal government, they will resist any effort on the part of the federal government to say, "You are no longer a tribe of Indians," even though the federal government may not have any further commitments to them as a people.

Then, third, the Indian people throughout the country more than ever before want to know what's going on in Indian Affairs. We started a publication here called The Indian Record. We started that less than two years ago as a voice coming from the Commissioner's office to the Indian people. And we started with--our first edition was 600 copies and now we are 15,000 copies a month. And the Indian people act like they're almost starving for news of what's going on in Indian Affairs.

And then there is a concern, of course, with their property rights in any commonly-owned resources as tribal members. This has been highlighted by the claims that are being prosecuted against the United States. If they are a tribal member, they want to participate in whatever distribution is made of any awards made to them by the federal government.

I think the future for the Indian people is very bright. I think their hopes and expectations are higher than they have ever been before. And I think that the interest shown by the President and by the Administration in the last few years in Indians is really beginning to show results in Indian country, not only in terms of what you see physically but in terms of attitudes. When you go out to Indian country, I can sense--I just have a feeling that there is something going on; that there movement there--

F: Vitality.

B: That there's a vitality and these communities are again coming into their own.

F: In the younger generation now, you went through a period of which you in a sense rejected the Indian background and tried to assimilate into the non-Indian world; and now then you have come back to the rediscovery of the Indian values while taking what is worthwhile, I judge, out of the non-Indian world. Is that correct?

B: Yes, this is correct.

F: Kind of a rediscovery on the younger generation's part?

B: Yes, this is true. When I went to a government school, you know, there were such restrictions as speaking your own language and things of this kind; and they tried to divorce you from your Indian background just as quickly as possible. This kind of philosophy, of course, has since been rejected and now the young Indian people are beginning to see that they will have a meaningful place. And as I stated in my talk about them and to them, it is up to the government and up to the tribes themselves to see that we provide a place for them.

F: Does the BIA consciously promote the preservation of certain Indian rights, traditions, etc., so that they don't get lost in all this material progress?

B: Yes, we do. Not only do we do it through our cooperation with tribes that carry on certain ceremonials, traditions, and activities, we are also doing it in bringing these things to the attention of the Indian persons as they start their educational process in our school system. In other words, we are beginning to provide in textbook and other instructional materials information for the young person as to these particular activities and their values and so forth, so that they can learn to make some judgments

themselves.

F: I'm not looking for unrestricted praise; I'm just trying to get an answer. What do you think the Indian attitude toward President Johnson and his Administration in general has been?

B: I think the Indian people are very responsive to the President. I think they recognize the fact that he has not only a passing or political interest, but a very deep personal interest in them. He has shown this certainly at every opportunity that Indian people have had to meet with him. And he extended an invitation and several hundred Indian leaders did attend my swearing-in ceremony on April 27, 1966; and they appreciated this very much.

F: Where was this held? Was this held indoors or out?

B: This was held indoors in the White House.

F: That was a pretty good gathering.

B: Yes, there was. All in all, I think they think a great deal of him and hold him in very high regard. And I think as time goes on and they begin to reflect back on history, that his stature is going to grow immeasurably with them.

F: Going back to your swearing in--I'm sure he asked for a list of personal friends that you would like to have invited, but did he pretty well work with you or with the Bureau in deciding just whom the invitees would be?

B: Yes, we worked very closely with him in providing the list of outstanding Indian leaders throughout the country. So this was one occasion where there were a substantial number, and then on other occasions he has had Indian leaders at the White House in connection with other ceremonies.

As you know, he recently issued a stamp commemorating the memory of

Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce tribe, and there was a ceremony in connection with that conducted by Mr. Marvin Watson, the Postmaster General; and there is also going to be, I believe, a second day of issuance out in the local community in Idaho scheduled for later this month.

F: Do you know where the idea originated?

B: No, I'm sorry, I don't know where that particular idea originated.

F: The Bureau of Indian Affairs has had, I don't need to tell you, a checkered history with some pretty inept leadership at times. Do you think, leaving you out of it--do you think that it has finally sort of gotten itself a course and knows where it is going?

B: I think that it has gotten itself a course because it has become, you might say, an advocate--I don't like to use the word, but almost a tool of the Indian people, and I think this is what its main function should be. It should be used by the Indian people to help them accomplish their goals--

F: Well, the old-time attitude was a paternalistic, authoritarian sort of attitude.

B: Oh, it definitely was and one of the things we have to guard against continually now, is the more subtle kind of paternalism which can easily creep into a federal bureaucracy or in the attitude of private agencies. Because sometimes, in our enthusiasm, we might get a little impatient with the progress they are making, but I think we have to measure it by the fact--not is the bureau progressing, but are the Indian people progressing?

F: Other than just giving yourself lectures about this, how have you avoided this subtle paternalism?

B: Well, we have many kinds of orientation sessions and in this orientation

session with our staff, we also invite Indian leaders. So the Indian people--

F: They orient you?

B: Yes, and the Indian people know what we are telling our staff at the same time the staff knows it. So that there is this kind of, you might say, control that is being exercised by the Indian people themselves because they are sitting in these meetings and they hear what we are telling our staff, what we are expecting of them.

F: When did this procedure begin?

B: I started this about a year ago, and we've had several seminars throughout the Indian country along this line.

F: Has it gotten some fairly rousing sessions?

B: Oh, yes, I think we've had some real excellent sessions. And the kind of sessions I like is when we get into a room with a number of people where there are Bureau of Indian Affairs staff who might be Indians, and everybody is talking. It's getting to the point now where you can't tell whether that's a tribal or a Bureau representative that is talking because we're developing and trying to come up with this kind of partnership that I think the President was talking about. It's the spirit behind it more than anything else.

F: Has there been any conscious effort to recruit Indians for employment in the Bureau of Indian Affairs?

B: Oh, yes, we are making a very strenuous effort to recruit qualified Indians and we are also providing training programs within the Bureau, so that the Indian people can advance in the Bureau. And we also have an approved orientation program whereby we hope to bring young Indians into the Bureau of Indian Affairs for seasoning for a couple of years, and then get them out

into the other agencies of government or private industry. We have, I think, about a dozen young Indian girls now as secretaries over in the State Department.

F: Oh, really?

B: So we are beginning to not only provide employment in Indian Affairs for Indians, but we are also seeing ourselves as a means by which Indian people can acquire experience, sophistication, and move out into other areas.

F: Approximately how many employees do you have?

B: We have approximately 15,000 employees.

F: What percentage would you say have a significant amount of Indian blood?

B: About 50 percent, a little over half of our 15,000 employees are Indians; about one-third of our staff here in Washington are Indians.

F: Have the tribal attitudes become sufficiently sophisticated that it really doesn't make any difference when you send a man to negotiate something with the tribe whether he is Indian or non-Indian?

B: No, I think Indian people still would prefer to talk with another Indian.

F: Of course, that's true with other--

B: But at the same time, they are pretty sensitive to one attribute that everyone should have in working with Indians, and that is sincerity. They can tell pretty quickly whether a person, Indian or a non-Indian, is sincere in their efforts with them. And being a very, what I call, elementary people without a lot of sophisticated facades, they get down to cases in a hurry. I mean it doesn't take them long to make their own determination about people.

F: We have largely been talking about Indian progress independently of other things. Do you think that the Indian has made relative progress since, say, the beginning of the New Deal, which marked a little bit of a turning point?

B: Yes, I believe that with that starting point there has been substantial social, economic and political progress among Indian people. However, I think the rate of progress has been much slower than the rest of the country. Consequently, at this point in time, you might say that the gap may be even wider than it was some thirty years ago.

F: Do you think that the widening is going to continue and enlarge?

B: No, I don't think so. I'm optimistic. And the reason why I'm optimistic is because of the emergence of the new kind of Indian leadership. And I think this Indian leadership has taken a look around, is becoming better educated, more sophisticated, and has come to the realization that they don't have to live in this kind of conditions, and that they do not have to be satisfied with this rate of progress. So with the leadership coming from rather (sic) than the Bureau of Indian Affairs, I feel the rate of progress will accelerate.

F: Can you cite the experience of the Navajos substantiating what you've just been saying?

B: Well, yes, I think I can. We have been in existence over a hundred years as a Bureau; however, I think we need to recognize certain things and put them in perspective. One example is in connection with the Navajo tribe, for instance, which makes up one-fifth of the Indian population. The Navajo tribe did not accept American education until 1946, which is only twenty-two years ago. And in those twenty-two years, they have grown from a largely illiterate people to a people that now manages a $25,000,000 a year program and administers over 16,000,000 acres of land and does all of this on automatic data processing equipment which is manned by tribal members except I believe for one non-Navajo employee. I think that while

some illiteracy still exists this kind of progress in phenomenal. I think that all throughout Indian country you're going to see an acceleration of this progress because the Indian leadership has now seen for itself what is possible, and they themselves aspire to much higher goals. And if we in the Bureau of Indian Affairs are to survive, we are going to have to become real tuned in with Indian leadership and if we don't get out of the way, we might get run over.

F: Do Indians look at other programs like, say, what the Puerto Ricans have done with their bootstrap operation as models of how they can come up rapidly to reduce the lag?

B: Yes, they see these kinds of programs and several of the Indian leaders have visited the Puerto Rican program and are well acquainted with it. They would support a program by the government of tax incentives to businesses' becoming established on the reservation as Puerto Rico did, but so far they haven't been able to get this view accepted.

F: Is that local opposition or--?

B: It's just the position that the federal government faces in connection with their budget problem. The government, of course, is looking for every opportunity they can to produce income to support the federal budget, so this particular interest of the Indian people gets involved in some other major problems. But they are beginning to contribute much more of their own resources to development, and they are becoming good negotiators with other federal agencies for the benefits of programs these agencies have.

It formerly used to be, about five years ago, that all of the Indian

delegations who came to Washington came to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Now they spend more time at other agencies than they do at the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Also, I might point out that about five years ago, of the federal dollars spent for Indian programs, directly or indirectly, over $90 of each $100 was spent by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In fiscal year 1969 out of every $100 of federal funds being spent directly or indirectly for Indian programs, the Bureau of Indian Affairs is now spending $53, so this shows how the contribution of other agencies to Indian programs has come up.

F: There is talk from time to time of sort of changing the nature of the Department of Interior to more of a Department of Conservation. In a case like that, do you think the Bureau of Indian Affairs should remain where it is, or do you think it belongs more naturally with say something like HEW?

B: Well, my recommendation already has been that there should be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and also for the programs of the islands and territories, because both of these agencies operate people-oriented programs. I think the concern of the Indian people in any transfer would be that, if the Bureau of Indian Affairs at any time is to be transferred, they would like to see it transferred as a unit and not have the various functions of the Bureau fragmented throughout the federal government. If this happens, the Indian people feel they'll never be able to find the sources of--

F: You mean, it's one reason when they come to Washington, they do have to go several places--

B: That is correct.

F: which makes its problems. You have turned around the decline in Indian population. For awhile it was diminishing, right? But that's no longer true?

B: This is correct. There always has been a very high birthrate among Indian people. I don't believe that the birthrate has ever declined, but the problem came about with the high infant mortality. Now with the improved health services, prenatal care, postnatal care, childcare programs, the likelihood of infants surviving has increased immeasurably. As a consequence this has caused quite a spurt in Indian population. And there are some areas such as Southwestern Alaska where there is about as high an increase in population as any place in the world. They're averaging over four percent a year.

F: One of these days they're going to have a problem there, aren't they?

B: Well, we already have, you know, a program of family planning in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We make all of the information available to Indian families on family planning and whenever there is any interest indicated by any families in any family planning program, then we refer these families to the Division of Indian Health for any family planning devices or anything of that nature in which they wish to participate.

F: Of course, President Johnson's attitude toward birth control, family planning, I suppose has played a role in this, too?

B: Yes, it has. And as a consequence of his interest, the Secretary of the Interior did make a policy announcement about eighteen months ago that there would be family planning services in the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

But as stated, this is strictly voluntary and we acquaint and promote the program with the Indians, and then if there is any actual interest indicated by any Indian people, then we at that point refer them to the Division of Indian Health.

F: Thank you, Mr. Commissioner, this has been very informative.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

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By Robert L. Bennett

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

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