

Indians demand greater energy policy role

On the heels of President Carter's July 15 Energy Message to the Nation, Peter MacDonald, Chairman of the Council of Energy Resource Tribes (CERT) and Chairman of the Navajo Nation, addressed the National Press Club, July 23, voicing Indian concerns amidst the current U.S. energy crises.

MacDonald's Washington, D.C., speech before a "Newsmaker's Breakfast", repeatedly stressed the view point of tribal government, in not being included in national policy matters.

MacDonald commended the President's "bold actions", but questioned why Indians were looked on as "foreigners" and were not consulted or invited to participate in the recent Camp David, Md., energy summit conference.

"We feel it is important for the administration to involve Indians in the energy program," stated MacDonald.

Presently, Indian tribes own 15 per cent of the U.S. coal reserves, one-half of the nation's uranium, 4 per cent of petroleum resources and significant quantities of geothermal potential oil shale and other alternative energy resources, according to a CERT inventory.

The Indian energy group had not been invited to attend a July 23 White House energy briefing for special interest groups, even after repeated CERT attempts to establish a dialogue with the Administration. (NCAI and the National Tribal Chairmen's Association were in attendance.) According to CERT's Chairman, there has been no reply from the White House.

Declared MacDonald, "I don't think the Administration knows that CERT exists. They know about Jesse Jackson, Vernon Jordan (Executive Director of the Urban League) and the president of the AFL-CIA but somehow, they don't know who owns 20 per cent of America's Resources. Why not have Indians at Camp David?"

Carter's energy message detailed two points of interest to Indians. Primarily, the President announced a massive commitment to cut industry's dependence on petroleum-fueled power plants and to convert to coal and other fuels. The President would create an Energy Security Corporation to spearhead a drive to reduce American oil and consumption by two and one-half million barrels of imported oil per day by 1990. This move would

also require utilities to reduce their dependence on imported oil by 50 per cent.

This Energy Security Corporation would have a 12 year charter and would be authorized to invest in or directly develop production capacity from coal liquids, coal gases, shale oil and unconventional sources, as well as developing additional domestic sources of petroleum.

In order to meet the 1990 targets for oil import reductions, the President plans to gain broad authority to accelerate the development of the domestic supply by Congressional creation of an Energy mobilization Board (S. 1516). The Board (EMB) will be authorized to designate "certain non-nuclear facilities as critical to achieving the nation's import reduction goals" and to establish binding schedules for federal, state and local decision-making with respect to those projects, according to a White House Fact sheet.

Figuring prominently in the EMB's broad authority will be its power to waive procedural requirements of federal, state or local laws in order to expedite the development and construc-

tion of a critical energy facility. Additional waivers would include bypassing application of "new substantive or procedural requirements of law which come in effect after the construction of a project has commenced."

The second point of interest to Indians in the President's proposals would provide for Low-Income Assistance to needy Americans in the form of a \$24 billion program administered through the Community Services Administration (CSA). The program would be financed by the windfall profits tax, with a supplement from state matching grants and revenue sharing funds. These plans to provide cash assistance, home weatherization aid and other forms of assistance to low-income families would more than triple the size of the President's proposals made earlier this year in April.

The Indian portion of the energy budget, now being debated on Capitol Hill, wavers between \$750 thousand on the House side to \$500 thousand on the Senate side. MacDonald labeled the figure as totally inadequate.

"According to my calculation a \$750 thousand federal Indian energy budget would account for just around five-millionths of the President's spending on energy security. That doesn't make the energy-producing tribes feel very secure," he said.

In discussing Indian energy requirements, MacDonald felt technical assistance and under standing combined with strict adherence to environmental laws and tribal concerns were first in Indian priorities. In detail, he mentioned that impact aid relief from the 'boom-town' type of development, management training and assurances of fair royalty payments would lessen Indian apprehensions during the current energy crisis.

"We want to work with the government, with industry, with all Americans to test new ideas and strategies, to overcome the adverse environmental and socioeconomic impacts that so often energy development," MacDonald remarked. "The CERT members tribes have

come to realize that our energy resources can - if carefully managed - become the foundation for overall economic development for a sector of American society which has been overlooked and under developed for more than two hundred years. Those resources also lie on the road to freedom from foreign oil dependence for all American people."

In reply to the President's coining of the term, "the moral equivalent of war," MacDonald asserted, "I am less than sure what the President means when he talks about the moral equivalent of war; history teaches me that when the U.S. looks for the moral equivalent of war, it declares the Indian and his land and resources to be the moral equivalent of the enemy."

He concluded, "Today, I offer my support and that of the 24 other CERT energy-producing tribes, to the President and his Administration, and will await his direction. But we will not wait forever."