

Ross Swimmer defines U.S. Indian Policy

Ross Swimmer, co-chairman of the U.S. delegation to the Inter-American Indian Institute Congress in Santa Fe, New Mexico, told participants that the various Indian policies of the United States in the past two centuries "were supported by people who honestly believed that what they were doing was for the good of the Indian people." Then he added, "We have had so much goodness we can hardly stand it."

Speaking October 29 of the present U.S. Indian policy Swimmer said, "We don't pretend to know all the answers relative to the improvement of the conditions in the future of even our own indigenous population much less those of other member nations."

"However, what we consider the keystone of United States' Indian policy and the best hope for the future is our most recent policy: that of self-determination. It is qualitatively different from previous policies in that it is Indian originated."

"The policy of self-determination is basically one of providing the

resources and technical assistance of the United States to help our Native Americans help themselves.

"It is no longer the policy of the government to create economic development that the government thinks is good for the American population. It is now the responsibility of the Indian governments to determine what is the best form of economic, social, political and educational development. "This is a policy which the United States has arrived at through a long process of trial and error."

In his conclusion, Swimmer said: "The Inter-American Indian Institute has the opportunity through this Congress to set as a goal the creation of a positive atmosphere throughout the region. This conference should be utilized to facilitate cultural, educational and technical exchange projects, to promote trade missions between Indians of the Americas, and to encourage dialogue between the Indian populations that seek solutions, not just paper work,"