

Hodel seeks new ideas for federal, Indian programs

Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel told Congress recently that long-standing problems plaguing federal efforts to serve Indian tribes will continue until the tribes, the Congress and the administration make a unified effort to "find new ways to work together toward our common goal: to create a framework within which American Indians can improve the quality of their lives."

In testimony prepared for the Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies of the House Appropriations Committee, Hodel said past policies are not necessarily working.

"We believe with bold, creative approaches, perhaps we could develop proposals which work," Hodel said.

He appeared at the hearing with Ross Swimmer, assistant secretary for Indian Affairs, who said that fundamental changes are needed to fulfil the proclaimed federal policy of self-determination for Indian tribes.

"It is time to give the tribes the responsibility they seek," Swimmer said. He explained that the concept of a paternalistic federal agency will clash with the concept of self-determination and freedom. And he added that this is not an issue of reducing financial support.

"The BIA is expected to address almost every social and economic ill known to mankind through approximately 100 discreet programs," Swimmer noted.