

Indians Forcefully Criticize Sec. Hickel

CHICAGO—The American Indians-United and the National Indian Youth Council in a joint statement this week demanded that the Nixon administration investigate Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel's recent statements regarding Indian reservation status at the Western Governor's Conference held in both Seattle, Wash. and Portland Oregon.

Jess Sixkiller is the executive director of the American Indians-United with headquarters in Chicago.

"Secretary Hickel's statements," the statement declared, "at the Western Governor's Conference in Seattle, Washington on July 30 imply a renewed Interior Department interest in the termination of Indian reservations.

"Hickel reportedly said, 'Indians will always have the crutch of being able to go back to the reservation. Indians have often come off the reservation, moved into the eastern cities and sometimes found they could not make it and returned to the reservation. They must cut the cord sooner or later and become involved in American society.'"

"These remarks," the statement continued, "and where they were presented seems to be in our opposition to Point Two of the Nixon address to Indians, 'Termination of tribal recognitions will not be a policy objective and in no case be imposed without Indian consent,' and Point Five, 'I will oppose any effort to transfer jurisdiction over reservations without Indian consent.'"

The statement of the AIU and NIYC also took to task Secretary Hickel's failure to appoint so far a new Commissioner of Indian Affairs which was vacated by resignation of Commissioner Robert L. Bennett.

Hickel was reportedly to have stated that he had come up with an Indian "who can do the job as Commissioner and get confirmed by the Senate."

"His methods of determining the next Bureau of Indian Affairs commissioner is apparently in opposition to Point Four of the Nixon address: 'The right of self determination if the Indian people will be respected and their participation in planning

their own destiny will be encouraged.'"

Hickel reportedly said in Portland, Ore. on July 31:

"Political considerations were involved in selecting a new Commissioner."

"The question is," the statement said, "whose political considerations was he referring to—to his own political future or the self determining destiny of Indian people?"

"We American Indians-United and the National Indian Youth Council demand participation in the selection of the next Commissioner of Indian Affairs. We further demand that the Nixon administration conduct an investigation of Mr. Hickel's statements at the Western Governor's Conference and in Portland to determine whether they were in the best interest of the Indian Americans and previously stated administration policy."

The Indian groups pointed out that recently BIA funding of over \$200 million was held up due to the Indians becoming a political pawn.

"Today," the groups said, "we are still without a commissioner though a parade of qualified Indians have been interviewed. We demand that recognized Indian organizations who are attuned to the people be the ones to recommend three qualified Indians from which one may be selected for the commissioner."

The American Indians-United is a national affiliation of off-reservation Indian organizations.