

For college-trained Indians—

New federal laws to create many jobs

"New laws shifting federal government responsibilities to Indian tribal governments will mean many job opportunities to college-trained Indians," reported Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner Morris Thompson to some 500 Indian students at Brigham Young University.

As the featured luncheon speaker concluding Indian Week, Commissioner Thompson praised the students for their efforts in getting an education and said, "We'll be waiting for your services in the months and years ahead to help implement the Indian Financial Aid Act that will foster a social and economic base on reservations as an alternative to Indians moving to urban areas."

The commissioner, a 36-year-old Athabascan Indian from Tanana, Alaska, told the students the BIA and tribal governments need people who know about change and how to implement change slowly.

"Some elders in tribal government resist change because they see youth as a threat. But the greatest challenges facing you leaders of tomorrow is that you have an impact that is totally accepted and consistent with local communities," he said.

Commissioner Thompson said the key cornerstone to the strengthening of self-determination of tribal groups is through Public Law 638 which shifts responsibility from the federal government to the tribal government — bringing both respect and cooperation to the people.

He encouraged students to look on the positive side of things, especially during America's Bicentennial celebration.

"America is the greatest nation on earth, and today in America is a positive time to be Indian. There is a great renaissance in Indian pride and comfort, and we can show this year what contributions Indians have made to the American culture through music, arts and crafts and agriculture."

Commissioner Thompson, who was presented a colorful beaded feather fan by Tribe of Many Feathers president Ramona Nez, said that he has met in New Mexico with 78 tribal leaders from throughout the nation and definitely felt the impact of BYU's Indian education and agriculture programs.

He pointed out that he now has five former BYU Indian students working in some key positions in the BIA.

Prior to the luncheon, Commissioner Thompson was featured in a taped interview with questions coming from John Maestas, chairman of the BYU Indian Education Department, as well as Indian students in the studio.

"BIA is making a conscientious effort and people are really beginning to appreciate it," he noted. "A new image is coming for the bureau, which spends about four-fifths of its budget on education."

One student from Wisconsin pointed to the problem of urban Indians. Commissioner Thompson responded that this is a recent phenomenon in the past 10 years . . . and more Indian cen-

ters in the cities are helping to insure resources and fill needs of the urban Indian.

When questioned about Congress and the administration being termination minded, he responded by saying that in the past several years the federal government and Congress have tried to right previous wrongs.

"They have reversed the trend by doubling land control for tribes in the past five or six years. This is a very encouraging sign," he concluded.