

# Natives Encouraged by President Nixon's Speech on Indian Situation

Alaska's natives who have been fighting hard to eliminate a provision in the recently passed Senate land claims bill calling for the termination of the Bureau of Indian Affairs were encouraged by a July speech of President Nixon.

In an address to the U.S. Congress, the President clearly repudiated a policy of forced termination. Termination is the discontinuance of the Federal trusteeship responsibility to Indians. Instead he called for self-determination without the threat

of eventual termination.

Nixon asked Congress to reaffirm for the legislative branch as he had for the executive branch—that the historic relationship between the Federal government and the Indian communities cannot be abridged without the consent of the Indians.

Alaska's natives have felt that termination should be no part of the land claims settlement and have indicated that they will endeavor to keep the provision out of the land claims bill to be written by the U.S. House. They hope that the President's speech will improve their chances of success.

In the speech, Nixon also announced a new national policy toward the Indian people: "To strengthen the Indian's sense of autonomy without threatening his sense of community."

"We must assure the Indian," he said, "that he can assume control of his own life without being separated involuntarily from the tribal group. And we must make it clear that Indians can become independent of Federal control without being cut off from Federal concern and Federal support."

Toward this end, he rejected the policy of paternalism and proposed "contracting out" le-

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# President Nixon...

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gislature which would enable any Indian community to take over the control or operation of Federally-funded and administered Indian programs in the Departments of Interior and Health, Education, and Welfare.

Furthermore, he extended his policy to the area of Indian education. Every Indian community wishing to do so, the President said, should be able to control its own Indian schools. Funds designed to help Indian students should be channeled directly to Indian communities and tribes rather than directly to the school districts as they now are.

To fight economic deprivation among the Indians, Nixon proposed the Indian Financing Act of 1970. This act would increase the Revolving Loan Fund, which loans money for Indian economic development projects, from about \$25 to \$75. Also it would provide \$200 million for loan guarantees and loan insurance to encourage private lenders to loan more money for Indian economic projects.

Pledging his administration to improving the health status of the first Indians, Nixon said

that he will request the allocation of an additional \$10 million for Indian health programs for the current fiscal year.

To assist reservation Indians in their transition to cities, he announced increased support to seven experimental urban centers.

The President also asked Congress to establish an Indian Trust Counsel Authority which would ensure independent legal representation for the Indians' natural resource rights. In such matters, the Indians are currently represented by the Departments of Interior and of Justice which often face a conflict of interests.

Lastly, he asked Congress to establish a new position in the Department of the Interior—Assistant Secretary for Indian and Territorial Affairs and called for continuing close consultation with Indians in the development of new programs and policies.