

15 American Indians Appointed to Key BIA Posts

Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel announced the appointment of 15 American Indians to key executive posts in the Washington, D.C., headquarters office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The Secretary also named 5 new BIA officials who are non-Indian. The appointments are the result of an executive realignment charted early this year as a move to make the BIA more responsive to changing conditions and needs among the Nation's more than 450,000 reservation Indians.

Hickel said: "The changes are central to our objective to taking the Bureau of Indian Affairs out of the business of managing the affairs of Indian Americans and putting it into the more appropriate role of advisor and advocate for Indian interests."

"This is in keeping with President Nixon's July 8th Message to Congress on Indian Affairs. Indian initiative is now getting a better chance to surface."

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Louis R. Bruce, heads the realigned BIA structure. "I am pleased," said Bruce, "to have this executive staff implementing our new policy. We are now prepared to make the Bureau totally responsive to the needs of the people it serves."

An Indian of Mohawk-Sioux descent, Bruce is the third Indian leader to hold the post of Commissioner. He was appointed to office by President Nixon in August 1969.

Hickel called attention to the Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico, which recently completed negotiations with BIA to assume control of all programs formerly operated by BIA on that reservation.

This new Indian venture into self-government is financed under contracts with BIA.

To illustrate the kind of support Indian tribes may continue to rely upon, Secretary Hickel

pointed to the newly created Indian Business Development Fund, financed through BIA, which provides equity capital or "seed money" to Indian-owned business in local Indian areas to enable such enterprises to get off to a sound start.

"This is a step toward a more viable local economy," he said.

The Secretary also commented: "Indians are responsible for these developments."

They are helping us make policy that makes sense to them. Now we are getting the kind of action Indians have been asking for—the kind that will result in more jobs, better education, and a strengthened sense of Indian identity."

Under the new realignment, the Commissioner is flanked by two Associate Commissioners—one heading program operations and one providing support services—with line authority.

Five new directorships of key programs—education, economic development, community services, fiscal management and administrative and related operations—provide the line-back-up services to the Commissioner and his two Associates.

Staff offices for tribal relations, intergovernmental relations, and legislation, and a group of immediate assistants to the Commissioner complete the new executive alignment.

The BIA's activities extend into 25 states, chiefly in the West. The majority of its employees are in positions in the Federal Indian school system.

Other BIA jobs relate to management and development of Indian lands and resources, social services, technical aid for commercial and industrial development, and facilities construction and operation.

It is expected that a number of these responsibilities will be assumed by tribal governments that are seeking more autonomy.



INDIAN APPOINTEES—Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Louis R. Bruce meet with the 15 new appointees to key Bureau executive posts. They are, left to right (back): Harold Bassett, William "Billy" Mills (Sioux), Ernest Stevens (Oneida), Anthony Lincoln (Navajo); Leon F. Cook (Chippewa), Geroge D. Scott (Creek-Seminole), Herschel Sahmaunt (Kiowa), Calvin Brice, John

Sykes. Left to right (front): Harold D. Cox (Creek), Harold Rainbolt (Pima), Arthur Gajarsa, Flore Lekanof (Aleut), Franklin Ducheneaux (Sioux), Helen Peterson (Sioux), Commissioner Bruce, Secretary Hickel, Alexander MacNabb (Micmac), James Hena (Tesuque-Zuni), Robert Gajdys, Clarence Acoya (Laguna), Allen Quetone (Kiowa).

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