

SPEECH BY COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS GLENN L. EMMONS AT A LUNCHEON MEETING OF THE MUSKOGEE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, MUSKOGEE, OKLAHOMA, JANUARY 6, 1955.

Let me say at the outset that I am deeply gratified by the whole idea of the Appreciation Day for the Bureau of Indian Affairs which you good people of Muskogee have arranged. Too often in the past we have had Depreciation Days for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and sometimes I wonder whether any agency of government has ever been so thoroughly and consistently depreciated as we have been over the past 130 years. So it is a welcome change to get away from the dead cats and the brickbats for 24 hours and to bask, even though briefly, in the warm out-pouring of one community's good will.

Seriously, though, I really welcome this opportunity to come before you today and discuss the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Muskogee, in my judgment, is one of the eight or ten cities in the country where we truly have some basic and community-wide understanding of the enormous complexities in the field of Indian affairs. But even here I suspect your focus is largely on the Indian problems of eastern Oklahoma and only to a limited degree on the nationwide picture. So I hope that my remarks on this occasion will be helpful in bringing about an even better understanding of what we are doing in the Bureau, what goals we are trying to accomplish, and how we are going about the job.

First I would like to outline for you the general scope and character of our operations in the Bureau. Then I want to discuss, somewhat briefly, the three main objectives that we have in mind and how we are trying to achieve them.

As most of you probably know, our work in the Bureau of Indian Affairs is based partly on treaty obligations of the United States to the various Indian tribes and partly on statutes enacted by Congress down through the years. To carry out these treaty obligations and acts of Congress, the Bureau of Indian Affairs is responsible for rendering to the Indians most of the services which the national, state and county governments furnish the non-Indians. While our responsibilities are manifold and complicated, they have been divided for administrative purposes into two broad categories. One is what we call "community services." The other has to do with Indian resources.

In the community services field we have the functions of health, education, welfare assistance, law enforcement, and relocation. As a group, these functions account for about two thirds of the total Indian Bureau budget and approximately the same proportion of our total personnel. Probably all of you have heard the old cliché that there is one Indian Bureau employee for every six Indian families or one for every 30 Indian people. As it happens, those figures are approximately correct. But there is an explanation for them and I believe a good one. It is to be found primarily in the community service responsibilities which we have in the Bureau under treaties with the Indian tribes and under laws enacted by the Congress.

In the field of health, for example, we are responsible for providing reservation Indians with a wide range of both curative and preventive services. This involves not only the operation of some 59 hospitals in the United States and Alaska but also the functioning