

Bureau failed miserably. Big Don was caught in the squeeze of what has traditionally been a vacillating, unpredictable policy on the part of the Indian Bureau. The reason for it is that the Commissioner of Indian Affairs has always been appointed by the President. Just about the time one Commissioner would catch on and begin to understand what he needed to do, they'd elect a new President and bring in a new Commissioner. And this is the history of Indian relations with the Government: changing policy. There has never been any continuity to the program. The Indian was suddenly confronted with more money than he had ever seen. All he had to do was ask for it. It was too drastic a change by the Indian Bureau for these older Indians to handle, who had little business experience.

Why in this town until about 20 or 25 years ago, every merchant had two prices, one for the white man and one for the Indian. The Indian Bureau in order to protect the Indian from paying these higher prices had a policy of-- well, for instance, if an Indian wanted to buy a television--in the old days it was a wagon and then automobiles--we'd have him tell us the store where he'd seen one like he'd like to have. Then our office would call the store and get a price, telling the merchant to send us the bill and we'd pay it out of the Indian's account.

For an Indian, when he has the money, price is no object. A long time ago, after the Cession Agreement in which the Acoma, Coahuila and Aracoe decided their lands to the government for reallocation, each tribe was entitled to so many million dollars for the lands. The government made a per capita distribution in silver dollars to the Indians. I had an old Indian tell me how when he was a boy his father had a basket full of silver dollars and that his father had tied that basket up to the rafters and just kept it up there for several years. He said, 'He didn't know what to do with those dollars. We just thought they were pretty.' The allotment