

**The original documents are located in Box 6, folder “Trail of Self-Determination” of the Bradley H. Patterson Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

July 12, 1976

## Memorandum

To: Commissioner, Bureau of Indian Affairs

From: R. Dennis Ickes *[Handwritten signature]*

Subject: Meeting with the Trail of Self-Determination Group on July 8, 1976

Attached are the names of the persons who attended the meeting on July 8 at the New Executive Office Building. The subject of the meeting was the paper entitled "Trail of Self-Determination, July 4, 1976," a copy of that document is also attached. They asked us to comment on the nine points contained in that document.

Dr. Marrs and I noted that Part I of that particular document was probably the most important one and thus we directed our attention to that Part. I noted to them that the Department, the Bureau, and the Administration are open to suggestions on how this Administration can better provide services to Indian people and how each can better carry out its responsibilities generally toward Indian people. I noted that the Administration is not so committed to any particular structure and that it will change if better ways can be found. I pointed out to the group that until Congress or this Administration decides to change the current system, however, that we would continue to operate within the current structure and that we would obviously try to improve each day on the way we do business. We have the humility to know that we do not have perfect organization, nor perfect people running them.

The discussion about Part I of their paper centered on the word "sovereignty" as it was used in Part I. I noted to them that there would be no agency within the Executive Branch of the government which could be completely sovereign of the Federal government or sovereign from the Executive, or sovereign from the Congress. It is unrealistic for them to think of themselves as having the monetary support and control of the U.S. without having the policy guidance and control to go with it.



We then got off on to the general discussion of specific complaints they had about various areas of the country from whence they came attempting to point out why a change was needed, why the Bureau or the DOI was not effective. Dr. Marrs and I both emphasized that the plan which they set forth in their paper in general, and as a general principle, was not necessarily a bad plan. Dr. Marrs went so far as to state that he did not think that the plan would improve upon that which already exists, and quite frankly was not as good as already exists. However, both Dr. Marrs and I agreed that what is important here is that the Administration and the DOI and the BIA attempt to be open-minded to suggestions such as the one they presented and incorporate those things which are viable and practicable and to learn from all persons how we can improve government and how we administer our programs. Dr. Marrs and I strongly emphasized that it was important for this group and all Indian groups who have views about Indian programs to lobby Congress, lobby the American Indian Policy Review Commission, lobby the various Indian Tribal Councils, to lobby Indian organizations throughout the country to get their support. I noted to them, as did Dr. Marrs, that it is the elected leadership of Tribal government that will have the greatest influence upon the policies of this Administration.

The group desired to receive commitments from the various agencies of government with whom they met. I made the following commitments to them:

1. That this Administration would remain open-minded about ways in which it deals with problems facing the American Indians as to the structure in which it addressed these problems.
2. That we would continue to seek ways of improving our performance within the structure existing.
3. That we would use our influence to encourage strict enforcement of Federal alcohol laws on Indian reservations.
4. That we would review the Mexican Ambassador's itinerary to the U.S. so as to assure him of some contact with indigenous peoples of the U.S.
5. That we would review the current status of Nesqually appeals to the DOI. Scott Keep is committed to looking at this.
6. That we would attempt to become more familiar with the FBI's operation Bicentennial to determine if another agency of the government is violating its trust responsibility.



7. That we would meet with this group again after they have met with other Federal agencies, Indian groups and etc., probably within one week.

I think that the commitments I made were reasonable, I would like to have your comments as to their reasonableness and as to how we can effectuate these things. I have already spoken with Tom Oxendine about the Mexican Ambassador's itinerary and he is going to check with you in regard to a Sam Delorea suggestion to have Vicky Santana accompany the Mexican Ambassador. It would be useful if we could complete our review of these commitments and be able to indicate some positive action on these commitments by our next meeting.

I concur in your suggestion that the meeting should be held Tuesday or Wednesday of next week. This meeting is now set for 3:00 pm. Dr. Marrs volunteered to attend such a meeting along with Bobbie Kilberg.

I feel that the meeting was generally good. Dr. Marrs and I strongly conveyed support for elected Tribal governments and for this group's participation with Tribal governments in bringing about their suggested changes. I would like your general reaction to this memorandum and other feedback you get concerning this particular meeting.

cc:  
Loren Rivard  
Ted Marrs ✓  
Mr. Shaphard  
Scott Keep  
R. Smoak



July 8, 1976

| <u>Name</u>       | <u>Representing</u>  |
|-------------------|--|
| Jim Schermerhorn  | Department of Justice<br>Office of Indian Rights                         |
| Scott Keep        | Department of Interior<br>Solicitor's Office                             |
| Gene Heavy Runner | Blackfeet Nation<br>Browning, Montana                                    |
| Ida Stuntz        | Klallam Nation<br>Washington State                                       |
| George Redstone   | Assiniboine Nation<br>Ft. Peck Indian Reservation<br>Wolf Point, Montana |
| Medicine Chief    | Blackfeet Nation<br>Browning, Montana                                    |
| Bill Franklin     | Franks Landing, Wn.<br>Nisqually Tribe                                   |
| Ted Marrs         | White House  |
| Hank Adams        | AIPRC - Task Force No. 1   |
| Susan Harjo       | NCAI   |
| Sid Mills         | Trail of Self-Determination  |
| R. Dennis Ickes   | Department of Interior<br>Deputy Under Secretary                         |
| Bud Shapard       | Department of Interior<br>Bureau of Indian Affairs                       |
| George Ortez      | News Photo.-World Week   |

