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Working Profile: Kenneth L. Smith***Tending the Indian Affairs Tinderbox***

By SETH S. KING

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17 — When Kenneth L. Smith, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, was asked why his people were still so suspicious of the agency he heads, he produced a letter that had been dispatched to all Indian tribes in 1923 by one of his predecessors.

The letter, from Charles H. Burke, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, complained that Indians were wasting too much working time performing tribal dances that were offensive to missionaries and to the Office of Indian Affairs. The letter warned that unless these deplorable practices were stopped voluntarily, drastic measures would have to be taken to halt them.

"Certainly nothing like that has gone out of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in many years," Mr. Smith said in an interview recently. "But a lot of Indians are still not convinced there won't be even worse attempts by Washington to destroy our native culture. Today the Bureau of Indian Affairs still follows regulations that were adopted clear back in 1895. Those practices were stupid then and they're stupid now."

Controversy over the Indians' century-long struggle to preserve their special status under Federal law, supposedly guaranteed by treaties their fathers signed with the white man, has flared for years. It did so again recently when Interior Secretary James G. Watt declared that the reservations had become worse examples of "failed socialism" than the Soviet Union. He also accused tribal leaders of fostering Indian dependence on Federal handouts so they could retain political control over their own people.

Watt's Remarks Praised

Mr. Smith, who took over the bureau in 1981, said that while Mr. Watt's language might have been imperate, his message was valid and "good for the tribes." He said he was disappointed when tribal leaders denounced Mr. Watt's resignation.

"The tribes should have welcomed his message," Mr. Smith said. "They should have said, let's use it to get the things we need. Instead, some of those leaders were in here the next day with their hands out."

Mr. Smith says that he has two objectives as an Indian in running the bureau. The first is to reduce his people's need for special treatment from Washington. The second is to promote more self-government on the reservations and less day-to-day supervision of tribal activities by the bureau.

He concedes that a number of his



The New York Times/George James

Kenneth L. Smith, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs.

more immediate predecessors had the same objectives, but that few had gotten very far.

But last month an Indian Policy Statement prepared by Mr. Smith was issued by President Reagan. It promised to support tribal governments in their efforts to achieve greater independence; it also promised to end the excessive Federal regulations and bureaucracy that the President said were strangling tribal councils.

Indian tribal leaders welcomed this declaration, although they said they had often heard similar ones. But they asked why it had taken the Reagan Administration so long to produce it.

"My answer is that we have made a start," Mr. Smith said. "But with my people, any time you try to make real changes in the way things have always been done, many of them fear you are moving toward termination, toward taking their reservations away from them."

The younger generation of Indians wanted to make these changes, he said, but the older leaders were afraid that if the bureau "pulled out" they would somehow be forced off their lands.

Before he came to Washington in the spring of 1981, Mr. Smith, had spent virtually all of his 46 years on the reservation of his Wasco tribe in Warm Springs, Ore., the latter part of them as general manager of tribal affairs.

In recent years, Mr. Smith said, a number of tribes having saleable resources such as timber, oil or coal on their reservations have made considerable economic and social progress.

But too many other tribes, he said, were living on unproductive land. And because of better health care in the last decade, tribal populations on many reservations have increased by

more than 70 percent. Many Indians on reservations have little chance of finding nonfarm work either on or off the reservation, he said, and there have been difficulties for the small industries, especially given the recession. The severe unemployment on most reservations has increased alcoholism, drug abuse and broken families, Mr. Smith said.

"I do not pretend to know all the answers to these problems," he added. "In the 1950's the Interior Department tried to train some reservation Indians and move them into city jobs. That did not work at all. So some way has got to be found for more development on the reservations. Maybe more by private companies."

One promise made in the Indian Policy Statement was the appointment of a special economic development committee of tribal leaders and non-Indian business executives.

Impact of Budget Cuts

Also, bureau lawyers are reviewing all Indian statutes with the intent of asking Congress to repeal some, Mr. Smith said. And he expected legislation soon giving tribal governments special standing in applying directly for Federal bloc grants.

He conceded that the Administration's cuts in social aid had hurt Indians more than others, because "we have become so dependent on it."

Mr. Smith said that the Federal Government, through his bureau, would continue its statutory trusteeship with the Indians.

"But if we Indians are really sold on greater self-government," he added, "we had better start moving more B.I.A. people off those reservations. If any tribal council comes to me and says we do not want the B.I.A. on the reservation running all our affairs, I will move them all off, right away."

PRESERVATION COPY

Reagan seeks peace with Watt-irked Indians

By GENE GOLDENBERG
Scripps-Howard News Service

WASHINGTON — The Reagan administration has moved to make peace with Indian leaders angered by Interior Secretary James Watt's charges that American Indian reservations prove the "failures of socialism."

But despite promises of new cooperation that flowed from an hour-long meeting between Watt and the heads of three major Indian organizations Monday, many tribal leaders gathered here for conferences were still calling for Watt's resignation.

"Most of our members are still asking for Watt's replacement," said Philip Martin, president of the National Tribal Chairmen's Association, after his group met in a three-hour closed-door session here.

Martin, however, sought to downplay the flap over Watt's remarks, preferring instead to use it to focus attention on Indian problems.

Neither Martin's group nor the National Congress of American Indians, which is also meeting here this week, is expected to call formally for Watt's resignation.

"We hope to use this flap in a positive way," explained NCAI chairman Joe DeLaCruz.

Even as the tribal groups met, the White House released the text of President Reagan's long-awaited Indian policy statement, the details of which were made public last week. The statement reasserts the commitment of past administrations to Indian self-determination, proposes expanded free enterprise on Indian reservations and new laws aimed at strengthening tribal governments.

That policy will be discussed at a White House meeting Wednesday morning between 250 Indian leaders and White House Counselor Edwin Meese.

Administration officials hope this salvo of attention to Indian issues will help calm feelings ruffled by what several Indian leaders here termed Watt's "patronizing attitude" toward Indian problems.

In a television interview last week, Watt said Indians have the highest rates of divorce, drug use, alcoholism, unemployment and "social diseases" because of "socialistic government policies on the Indian reservation."

He said it is time to stop treating Indians as "incompetent wards" and charged some tribal leaders are more interested in cementing their political base than in improving the lot of their

tribes.

Watt had breakfast at the Interior Department Monday with Martin, DeLaCruz and Wilford Scott, chairman of the Council of Energy Resource Tribes. Ken Smith, who heads the Bureau of Indian Affairs, also attended the breakfast meeting.

All three Indian leaders said they were more concerned with the administration's new Indian policy than they were with Watt's statements.

"We know where he's coming from," DeLaCruz said later. "There's nothing

in that interview that he hasn't said before."

"We told him the problems can't be solved with rhetoric," Martin said.

Watt asked the Indian leaders to set up working committees of tribal leaders for Interior Department officials to contact in specific subject areas. Watt's aides described the session as "cordial," with all sides endorsing the need for improved communications between Indian leaders and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

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United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

RN

JAN 27 1983

January 25, 1983

Here is some information on the Indian
issue and other Interior-related topics
that may be of interest to you.

Douglas Baldwin
Assistant to the Secretary



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

January 25, 1983

INFORMATION KIT

Secretary Watt has asked that we make available to members of the NCAI, the NTCA and CERT all available information regarding the issue of recent days concerning Interior's trust responsibilities toward American Indians.

Attached to this note are:

- ° A transcript-from-tape of the Secretary's speech today at the National Congress of American Indians;
- ° Full text of the Indian related contents from Conservative Counterpoint, broadcast January 19;
- ° Full text of the Secretary's interview on Good Morning America, January 20.
- ° Secretary's Guest Editorial "U.S. Tries to Build Tribal Self-sufficiency," in USA Today, January 24--along with USA's lead editorial;
- ° The full text of ABC's Nightline of last Wednesday, January 19.

Douglas Baldwin
Assistant to the Secretary
(202)343-6416

Remarks of Secretary of the Interior James Watt
To the National Congress of American Indians Executive Board
Washington, D.C.
January 25, 1983

Thank you for letting me come. I spoke to your Bismarck group and had not intended and never planned that I would speak today. Ken was going to share with you some things, and yet because of the confusion I thought it was important that I appear.

There has been tremendous abuse, tremendous confusion and there need not have been any. I have traveled and I've visited some of the reservations--not all of them. But I have listened for two years. Joe (DeLaCruz) says he doesn't know whether his remarks had an impact on the Indian policy--Joe they did. We heard and we listened.

I'm the first Secretary of the Interior to have ever visited the Navajo Reservation--the largest reservation. I cannot believe that one who carried the trust responsibility for the Indians people would not have visited the largest Indian reservation. But I was told that I was the first to visit it and the first to address their congress.

I was the first Secretary of the Interior to visit the second largest tribe--Cherokee Indian Nation. We met with all the chiefs of the Oklahoma tribes at Tahlequah, I was the first Secretary to go to that Indian country and I listened and I listened intently and I've taken the abuse of a few who were there seeking political attention and headlines and notoriety, but those were the few.

Most of the Indian leaders I have met have a compassion in their heart for their people. And I've worked with those people, I've listened, and yet you folks have been abused. And if my words have caused hurt--and I understand last night from the visits I had when I was with the several hundred that were there at that CERT (Council of Energy Resource Tribes) meeting that some have been hurt and I apologize for that hurt.(Applause)

But I don't apologize for the message because the Indian people of America have been abused by the United States Government for too many years and we've got to bring about change. Now that change is only going to come in one way and that is that the Indian country leaders have got to carry their message to the Congress of the United States. I have a trust responsibility, Ken Smith has a trust responsibility, and our people have a trust responsibility. We will not be calling for major reform of anything. We will carry out the duties and obligations set forth in the treaties and the statutes of this country. But that's not good enough. (Applause) I don't think that's good enough. The problems are there.

Now other political leaders have chosen to sweep the problems under the rug and pretend they don't exist. They have put them there and said, "well things are getting better, a little bit more money here and a little bit more money there, but things will get better." They have not gotten better. And there's only one way to bring about change in America. And that's to call attention to it and be honest enough to face up to the truth. And the truth is that Indian governments--the tribal governments--have been abused by the United States Government for decades if not a hundred years. And that needs to be changed and I cannot change it alone, Congress must do it. And we've asked for some changes.

Both Ken and I have focused our attentions within the law and within the treaty obligations to bring a response to the message we've heard from the leadership--the elected tribal leadership. And we've tried, and in some areas we have been marvelously successful and in some areas we haven't even dented the surface.

But one of the issues that I learned when I bounced along the roads when I was on the Navajo Reservation, Peter McDonald--I know he sent me on the worst roads he could find, but he did it anyway. And because of our leadership we put in the President's program a provision that will provide a hundred million dollars a year to build roads on Indian reservations. (Editor's Note: BIA will receive \$75 million in FY 1983 and \$100 million for the next three fiscal years). You have never had that before. We've listened, Joe.

We focused our attention on water. For those tribes from the Western part of the country particularly, water is the crucial issue. And I've not seen another Administration ever be willing to face up to the water problems, but we have. And we move at the pace that the tribal government has asked us to move. We will not force anything on them. That's the President's statement of yesterday and last week.

We've focused on education; I think the root problem. I appreciated Linda's (Miss NCAI) remarks last night as well. Linda talked about the future generations. If we have compassion, if we have a heart for Indian people we've got to bring about change. We've got to bring about better education. When I look at the unemployment and the other social problems, we've got to address those problems.

Now yesterday I had what I thought was a very successful meeting with Joe, your chairman. I met with the chairman of the tribal chairmans' group, Phil Martin, and I met with Wilfred Scott. I thought we had a good meeting. We dictated a letter. In fact I sent the three of them a letter that they helped me dictate. It's nice to get a letter that you helped dictate because then you're sure it says what you want it to say. And Joe it said what you wanted it to say. And said that we would be glad to work with you as you folks identify the problems.

As we work with the elected tribal leaders and others from tribal governments we will address the problems. And that Ken Smith and I will dedicate the time to work to solve the problems. But we will carry out our trust responsibilities. We'll try to bring change, but the burden is yours. You must identify the problems, you must bring forward the solutions.

When you've identified those problems to me as I have traveled and as I've visited with you in Washington, meeting after meeting after meeting, we've heard. And Ken Smith chaired the working group that wrote the Indian Policy that was submitted to the President for his approval.

And, yes, Joe, we tried to get to announce it in October in Bismarck. I thought I was going to announce it then. Then we tried to get different meetings together, but the President was determined that he would have input. While Ken is principally responsible for writing it and did most of it--and he did listen to Joe and he listened to the others. And by the way, for the press, Ken Smith is the first Indian from a reservation to ever head the Bureau of Indian Affairs cause we believe in reservations. That's Indian land, not Federal land, that's Indian land. And it should stay that way and there should be no bureaucrat in Washington running that, it's your land.

But the President wanted to have input in that, he wanted to be involved in that policy. He'd made commitments in the campaign to different Indian groups and he wanted to be sure that his Indian Policy reflected those promises and those commitments and he saw to it that it does.

We will deal on a government to government basis. We will honor your elected officials and we will see that our energies are given to bring about the solutions that are needed. And Joe and Phil and Scotty have agreed to help identify the leadership from Indian country. And let me tell you, most of it is going to come from Indian country, not from Washington, D.C. And we will bring about the changes that you want brought about at your pace.

But there must be change if we're going to give Linda and her future generations some of the opportunities and changes that some of us who are older didn't get. And I'm not happy when I look at the record of what this Federal Government has done to and with the Indian people. And while I spoke out I've been given abuse by the press. Terribly abused by the press. And when Joe looked at the TV tapes as several of you have, he said "I don't know what the big deal is about, it is what you said in Bismarck." It is. It is what I've been told as I travel and as the Indian leadership has come to Washington. They've told me of these problems and I've reflected them. Your leadership has testified before Congressional committees for years and years and years and yet the problems are not solved. We've thrown money at some of the symptoms and not addressed the cause.

I have given you an opportunity; don't muff it. I've given you an opportunity at the cost of personal abuse that I hope none of you will ever have to endure. I've taken the abuse of the press and some of your people who attacked my motives, my thoughts, my deeds, and my actions. I've paid a price. But I have given this group and the leadership of this group more attention, more opportunity to focus the attention of the American people and the Congress of the United States at solving your problems. I have worked for two years with this same message, and because of unprofessional press conduct it was blown out of shape, lied about, but one thing it did do--it got attention. And it

increased attendance at this meeting, Joe. And I ought to get credit for that because most Secretaries of the Interior sweep you under the ground--under the ground is about right, isn't it--under the rug and try to put on a lid and say, "let's hope that nothing happens in Indian country." I want something to happen in Indian country. I want to solve problems. I want to help people. Now I have drawn the attention of America to the multiple problems and maybe I used some unartful language, but boy, I got attention.

The problems are yours, friends. We will respond, we will carry out our trust obligations. And if you want to change those, it's your show. We will be responsive, we will respond to your initiative. No other Secretary has ever given you the platform that I have given you in the arena. I'm not important in the course of history, but I'm concerned about those young Indian people that need an education, that need to be given an opportunity for jobs, that haven't even been born and that will be born as we prepare for the 21st Century.

Let me talk to you about education. I was supposed to take 8 minutes and run, but, boy, you have got me wound up here, I want something to happen.

Education, I believe in public education, I don't believe in government education. I think that those people living on the reservation are better able and have more concern about their children to run their schools than does some government official in Washington, D.C. I believe in local schools. I've always believed in public schools. I don't believe in government schools. And you look at the record of the BIA school system and it's not as good as it should be. I don't care how good you think it is; it is not as good as it should be. And I would like to have better education and I think that Indian government leaders, those who live on the reservation, have a better understanding for the children on that reservation than do a bunch of people like me here in Washington. And that's the challenge I give to you. To me the most important issue is education.

And we've addressed some problems and we've had some marvelous successes. We've had some stunning failures. But friends, you're given a golden opportunity, and let me just say something here based on what I've had to go through the last few days--if this opportunity is not picked up by Indian leadership I don't know that you'll ever get another Secretary of the Interior to address the Indian problems. In fact, if these problems are not picked up and solved with the introduction I've given you to the Congress of the United States, the forces on the Hill will sweep it under the rug like they've done for the last several decades. Don't let them do it. Your people deserve better than the Federal government has given them. Your people deserve a chance. They deserve an opportunity. The problems are severe. I'm willing to address them with you. I'm not willing to address them without you.

Thank you very much.

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Excerpts from an interview with Secretary of the Interior James Watt on
"CONSERVATIVE COUNTERPOINT" scheduled for broadcast over Satellite Program
Network (SPN) January 19, 1983

Q: At the heart of the problem is a reservation policy which distinguishes Native Americans, distinguishes Indians from the rest of the population. Instead of a policy assimilation and integration with respect to the Indian, the policy is one of distinction, of separation. Do you think that's right?

WATT: We have tremendous problems on the Indian reservations. (How) I frequently talk about it by telling people if you want an example of the failures of socialism, don't go to Russia--come to America and go to the Indian Reservations.

We have 50 million acres of Indian reservations, 1.4 million American Indians, and every social problem is exaggerated because of socialistic government policies on the Indian Reservations. Highest divorce rate, highest drug rate, highest alcoholism rate, highest unemployment rate, highest social diseasesbecause the people have been trained through 100 years of government oppression to look to the government as the creator, as the provider, as the supplier, and they've not been trained to use the initiative to integrate into the American system.

We have terrible schools on the Indian reservations and we've tried to change that. Congress won't. The liberal eastern idea is that.... I'll support the Indian people and they drive out to my home state of Wyoming in August for (a) two-week vacation, buy an Indian bead necklace, and think they have done their thing for Indian America. Terrible socialism. We ought to give them freedom, we ought to give them liberty, we ought to give them their rights, but we treat them as incompetent wards. I'm their trustee. They can't make a decision on the reservations about their water, their lands, they can't own land on the reservations.

Q: Is that the basis of much of the legitimate anger of many of the Indian leaders, forgetting the radicals for a moment (who) are using the Indian issues...the fact that they literally live on a plantation?

WATT: That's correct with big Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of the Interior controlling their rights. Now there are some benefits to that.

Q: Sure. Isn't it true that some of the established Indian leaders have a strong personal stake in the present policy and oppose what they call termination?

WATT: In the Great Society, we came in with all these legal aides and all these programs and made federal funds available to fund Indian Governments. So if you're the chief or the chairman, you're interested in keeping this group of people assembled on a desert environment where there are no jobs, no agriculture potential, no water, because if the Indians were allowed to be liberated, they'd go and get a job and that guy wouldn't have his government handout as a government Indian paid official.

Q: They've become Ward Bosses. I've heard Senator Goldwater in Arizona talk about the impact of federal legal services programs in taking an Indian community that was once very conservative in its values, radicalizing it politically, and then turning it out on a reliable basis for liberal candidates.

WATT: In too many instances. Now they're ... fortunately there are some great American Indian people that want to bring freedom to their people. They want their people have jobs and take their social place and we've been working with them and so it's very discouraging with the limitations that Congress gives us with the laws. It's very encouraging when you work with a few of the Indian people because they are electing some good people. There is hope if we'll let our people go. We ought to have ... if we had treated the black people in America like we are now treating Indians or the Chinese or any of these other minority groups there would be a social revolution that would tear the country up. But Congress tolerates the abusive government actions on Indians and I try to liberate them and get squashed by the liberal Democrats in the House of Representatives.

PROGRAM:	GOOD MORNING, AMERICA	DATE:	THURS., JAN. 20, 1983
STATION OR NETWORK:	ABC TELEVISION NETWORK	TIME:	7:00 AM, EST

SECRETARY WATT RESPONDS TO INDIAN CALLS FOR RESIGNATION

STEVE BELL: The leaders of 154 American Indian tribes are meeting here in Washington next Monday to issue a formal response to what they call anti-Indian rhetoric by Interior Secretary Watt. Joe Spencer reports the response has been bitter so far.

(FILM SHOWN)

JOE SPENCER: As word of Secretary Watt's statements spread throughout Indian reservations across the country, reaction was swift and angry.

BILL HOULE (CHIPPEWA CHAIRMAN): Secretary Watt should immediately submit his resignation.

PAM CHIBITTY (OKLAHOMA NATIVE AMERICAN COUNCIL): It's very obvious that he's not knowledgeable of the federal trust relationship between the federal government and the Indian people.

SPENCER: However, there were Indian leaders who agreed with Watt's assessment that a wide range of social problems does exist on the reservations.

JERRY SHAW (MID AMERICAN INDIAN CENTER): We're hearing on some reservations the alcoholism rate is as high as 50 percent. I know; I just got back from the Navajo country. Unemployment out there is 75 percent. No doubt there's a lot of serious problems in Indian country.

SPENCER: Although Watt and the White House would like to see the controversy surrounding his statements forgotten, it appears some Indian leaders are not about to forget, or forgive.

NOAH BILLIE (SEMINOLE INDIAN): I don't know why he should make such a hard statement. To me, that's a direct attack

on my own land. And if he wants war, then we'll go to war. I feel that strongly about it.

Joe Spencer, ABC News.

* * * * *

DAVID HARTMAN: In a television interview aired yesterday, James Watt, the Secretary of the Interior, said that Indian reservations in America represent, to quote him, "the failure of socialism."

Now, many Indian leaders have protested his remarks, accusing the Secretary of racism. There have also been many calls for the Secretary's resignation.

And James Watt is in Washington this morning, and Steve Bell, of course, is joining us as well. Good morning, Mr. Secretary.

JAMES WATT: Good to be with you, David.

HARTMAN: Thank you very much. Let me quote you: "If you want an example of the failure of socialism, don't go to Russia come to America and go to the Indian reservations." Also, you said that Indians on the reservations have "the highest divorce rate, highest drug rate, highest alcoholism rate, highest unemployment rate, and the highest social diseases in the country."

One tribal chairman from the state of Washington said quote, "That's the kind of racism talk the country doesn't need from the Secretary of the Interior." And another tribal leader is saying, "That's the most racial (sic) slur that they've heard from a government official." unquote.

How do you respond, Mr. Watt?

WATT: I've been trying for two years to draw attention to the terrible plight of the American Indian. The American Indian has been abused for years and years. And for too many years politicians have simply been trying to sweep it under the rug, acting like it's not there. They deserve better. The federal government is abusive to them. The Bureau of Indian Affairs has not done a good job.

We need to help these people overcome their problems. As I've travelled, and been on the reservations with these Indians -- they're tremendously talented people, they have good governments. If we'll let their government function, and get the federal government off their backs.

HARTMAN: If that's been your attitude, Mr. Secretary, how do you account for this tremendous outpouring of reaction from the entire Indian community, or from most of the Indian community?

WATT: Yes, I think you need to point out, it's a very small segment of the Indian community, and any day of the week you can get some of those people calling for my resignation. I think that's healthy. We need to have this issue debated. I have trust responsibilities. I have legal and treaty responsibilities that I must live up to. So I don't have the option of doing very much about these problems.

We've focused our attention on a few issues. We've tried to bring some help to the Indian reservations but most of the debate has to be carried out between the Indians and Congress. And I've tried for two years to focus attention on this terrible plight of the American Indian. And hopefully we'll get some attention and coverage out.

STEVE BELL: Mr. Secretary, just for the record, 154 tribal representatives are going to be meeting here Monday to draft a formal response to what they consider slurs from you. How do you have this communications gap, if you will?

WATT: We don't know what that 154 are going to do. We've talked to most of them. I've been telling the Indians that -- this is not new rhetoric, I've been saying this for two years to the Indians, to every news conference I've had, to groups around. The American Indian needs help. They have too much unemployment. All these social problems are symptoms of the basic cause. Let's address causes instead of just addressing the symptoms.

BELL: What do you mean that it's an example of socialism failed?

WATT: Good. Let's start with some examples. Education. The American Indian deserves a good education. I believe in public education where the local public government will manage their own schools. We have government schools. The Washington bureaucrats that I'm responsible -- I'm a bureaucrat in a sense. I run the local school systems for the Indians. Obviously that education system is not good enough for the Indian. They are not employed, they're not having the opportunities that other Americans are. We ought to give it to them. The education system is wrong because it's a government system run out of Washington rather than a public school run by the Indians.

HARTMAN: And yet, Mr. Secretary, John Echohawk, who is of native American Nations (?) Fund says, quote, "The Indians need tribal self-government. If that's what Mr. Watt calls socialism,

then he doesn't know what he's talking about. That's good old American democracy."

WATT: O.K. What we really want is tribal self-government not government from Washington by the BIA officials, the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The tribal governments, the elected people, are good people. I've been meeting with them. I've been on the reservations more than other past secretaries. And the tribal governments are good. Give them a chance. Get Washington off their backs. That's the problem: Washington, not the governments. The Indian governments are good. The Washington government is oppressive. That's what needs to be reduced.

HARTMAN: If you have been clear -- in making yourself clear -- that this is your attitude, Mr. Secretary, why has the Governor of New Mexico, Governor Hayes, called for your resignation?

WATT: I've not met the Governor. I imagine it's good old partisan American politics. I think that's healthy. That doesn't bother me a bit.

BELL: You just said the Indian governments are good, yet you're quoted as having said on that television interview, that some tribal Indian leaders are interested in keeping their people, quote, "assembled on a desert environment where there are no jobs, no agriculture potential, no water, because if the Indians were allowed to be liberated, they would go and get a job and he, the tribal leader wouldn't have his government handout as a paid government Indian official."

WATT: Well, we've seen that problem too but the -- pluralism in the Indian community, in the Indian country, is strong. There's some powerfully good leaders. And they're wanting what I'm talking about, as your news program called earlier. They're saying Jim Watt is correct. Let's address the cause and not the symptoms.

BELL: One of the specific criticisms in one of our reports from an Indian was: "He's trying to drive us off the reservations, our only land."

WATT: It is their land. I want them to be able to run their land and not a bunch of bureaucrats like Jim Watt and others dictating from Washington how they should handle their land. It's theirs, let them have it, not a bunch of bureaucrats here in Washington running it. They're better able than we are.

HARTMAN: Mr. Secretary, do you think you ought to resign?

WATT: If I can draw attention to this Indian issue and get that solved, I will have made a significant contribution to

America, and particularly to the American Indian who deserves so much better attention than the government has given him for 100 years. It's a problem we cannot afford to sweep under the rug. Let's address it, let's solve it. Let's don't just throw money at symptoms. Let's help those people help themselves rather than abuse them like the government has done in the past 100 years. It's a shameful thing we've done.

HARTMAN: Secretary James Watt, thank you for joining us this morning.

WATT: Great, good to be with you.

USA TODAY

OPINION

John Seigenthaler, Editorial Director
John J. Curley, Editor
Allen H. Neuhauser, Chairman

JAMES WATT

Guest columnist

U.S. tries to build tribal self-sufficiency

WASHINGTON — The Reagan administration is strongly committed to strengthening tribal governments so we can bring lasting solutions to problems plaguing many reservations.

Persistent problems on reservations are *not* the fault of the Indians themselves. Indians are the victims of failed federal policies. Subjugation by the cavalry in the 19th century was replaced with suffocation by federal bureaucracy in the 20th century. Excessive regulation and self-perpetuating bureaucracy have stifled tribes, thwarted Indian control of reservation resources and promoted dependency.

Indian leaders want to take charge of their reservations and their destinies. We in the Reagan administration ardently want to help them achieve their goals. Tribes have a right to develop the human and natural resources of their reservations; the 735,000 Indians living on or near reservations are entitled to the opportunities guaranteed to all other Americans.

Our Indian policy calls for the conduct of federal-tribal relations on a government-to-government basis, just as with states and cities. We recognize a continued federal trust responsibility. With this is a commitment to build tribal self-sufficiency and to minimize federal interference on reser-

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ventions. Tribes are encouraged to assume responsibility for law and order, education and other services.

President Reagan has established a commission to recommend actions to improve reservation economies. Meanwhile, we are working with new programs to attract private capital to reservations. Just one of these is a new law we supported that allows tribes to enter joint ventures with private corporations in ways which bring not only greater economic return to tribes but also develop Indian skills in business and management.

Some tribes have developed successful reservation enterprises despite past federal policy; we will make it easier for other tribes to follow these good examples.

America's need for energy and other resources will give many reservations opportunities to prosper. Our policy encourages tribes to take advantage of this need, while carefully protecting their culture, environment and sacred lands.

Once freed of this stifling bureaucracy, America's reservation Indians can and will solve many of their own problems, and will contribute significantly to the rebuilding of America.

The Topic: AMERICA'S INDIANS

Each day, USA TODAY explores a major news issue. Today's page includes our opinion that another study won't solve the problems of native Americans, other views from the secretary of interior, Arizona, South Dakota and Washington, and voices from across the USA.

Restore the pride of first Americans

At some time during his term of office, every American president, starting with George Washington, has asked himself: "What am I going to do about the Indians?"

Different presidents, faced with different times and different pressures, found different answers. Andrew Jackson adopted a policy to brutalize them. Herbert Hoover picked an Oklahoma Kaw, Charles Curtis, to be his vice president.

Most presidents in this century have named committees to "study" problems of Indians. Many have resolved to "help" them. A few have truly tried to be sensitive to the plight of native Americans who are caught in a cultural vise of values in conflict. But, finally, almost every administration has given lip service to superficial solutions. And the country has continued to ignore tragic conditions that cause frustration and hopelessness among the majority of its 1.4 million Indians, 735,000 of whom live on reservations.

Tribes and individual Indians own more than 52 million acres held in trust by the U.S. government. But while the land is theirs and they cling to their cultural heritage, there is little in their daily lives to give them pride.

Life on most reservations is hellish. Unemployment has soared above 30 percent and on some reservations actually approaches 80 percent. Housing conditions are often substandard. Health services are inadequate. Lack of opportunity creates a despair that has produced phenomenally high rates of suicide and alcoholism.

Last week it was the Reagan administration's turn to address the question of what to do about the Indians. The president announced he will name a nine-member commission — co-chaired, of course, by a non-Indian and an Indian — to find ways to improve reservation economies.

The commission's charge is to discover how to develop stronger private sector investment in Indian reservation commerce and how to reduce federal funds and the "federal presence" in Indian affairs.

The Reagan answer to the Indian question would have gone virtually unnoticed had not Interior Secretary James Watt selected that moment to issue one of his cryptic assaults on liberalism, declaring that reservations represent "an example of the failures of socialism."

Some Indian leaders criticized the secretary for oversimplifying the historic complexity of Indians' suffering. Still, the timing of the secretary's remarks will force national attention on the tragedy afflicting the first Americans.

That, in and of itself, is a service. But another study group and another try at reservation free enterprise won't cure Indian ills. The cure won't come until all the people of this land share the Indians' sense of lost pride and determine at last and at least to give that back to them.

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PROGRAM: ABC NEWS NIGHTLINE	DATE: WED., JAN. 19, 1983
STATION OR NETWORK: ABC TELEVISION NETWORK	TIME: 11:30 PM, EST

REACTION TO WATT'S REMARKS ABOUT INDIANS

JAMES WATT (SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR): If you want an example of the failures of socialism, don't go to Russia; come to the United States and go to the Indian reservation.

TED KOPPEL: American Indians have long suspected that James Watt is anything but their best friend in Washington. And when a television interview was released today in which Secretary Watt cited the high rate of Indian alcoholism, drug addiction and venereal disease, that made things even worse.

But then Watt was quoted -- inaccurately -- as calling for the abolition of Indian reservations, and the fat was really in the fire. Calls for his resignation have swept through almost all the tribal councils. Tonight we'll look at what James Watt really said and at what Indian leaders thought he meant.

* * * * *

Good evening. The television program on which Interior Secretary James Watt was interviewed -- and the interview actually took place last Thursday and was broadcast this evening -- that program is called "Conservative Counterpoint." It is hosted by a conservative columnist and the national director of the Conservative Caucus. It is produced by the most successful conservative fund raiser in the country, Richard Viguerie.

It was Mr. Viguerie who put out a press release following the interview with James Watt claiming that Watt had called for the abolition of all Indian reservations. UPI, the wire service, ran that story, and the heat was on. Indian leaders, responding to press reports, called for Watt's immediate resignation -- except that Watt never said what he was quoted as saying. What he did say, however, was controversial enough.

WATT: We have tremendous problems on the Indian reservation. I frequently talk about it by telling people, if you want an example of the failures of socialism, don't go to Russia; come to America and go to the Indian reservation.

We have 50 million acres of Indian reservations, 1.4 million American Indians, and every social problem is exaggerated because of socialistic government policies on the Indian reservation: highest divorce rate, highest drug rate, highest alcoholism rate, highest unemployment rate, highest social diseases -- because the people have been trained through a hundred years of government oppression to look to the government as the creator, as the provider, as the supplier. And they've not been trained to use the initiative to integrate into the American system.

JAMES BILLIE (SEMINOLE TRIBAL CHAIRMAN): To single out just one group of people and say that we're all -- what are we -- I've seen one particular part where he says the reservations are plagued by drugs and alcohol abuse, unemployment, divorce and venereal disease. I can guarantee I can go off my reservation right now into the Broward County system and show you the same thing. The United States is plagued -- I could keep on going.

ELMER SAVILLA (NATIONAL TRIBAL CHAIRMANS ASSN.): The National Tribal Chairmen Association is appalled and dismayed at the distortions and misinformation about conditions on the reservation that Secretary Watt made at an interview broadcast today -- being broadcast today on the Satellite Program Network.

PAM IRON (TULSA INDIAN AFFAIRS CHAIRMAN): True, there are a lot of alcoholism; there is a lot of social problems that do exist. But in the last ten years, the Indian people have been determining their own policies. When the self-determination act went into effect, this is when the Indian tribes had the right to determine their fate instead of social policy set by the government always being the one that made the decisions on how the Indians should live.

WATT: We came in with all these legal aid and all these programs and made federal funds available to fund Indian governments. So if you're the chief or the chairman, you're interested in keeping this group of people assembled on a desert environment, where there are no jobs, no agricultural potential, no water, because if the Indians were allowed to be liberated, they'd go and get a job and that guy wouldn't have his government handout.

CHIEF BUFFALO TIGER (MICCOSUKEE TRIBE): Our reservation lands are good land for the oil and coal and -- what do you call it? -- the resources, natural resources. I'm sure that the government is interested in taking some of this land and make something out of it, and the Indian have to be sitting on that (sic).

SAVILLA: We charge that Secretary Watt has breached his duties deliberately, and we ask that President Reagan immediately investigate Mr. Watt's actions as the principal trustee for Indian affairs.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Watt, are you suggesting that we do away in any way with the reservations?

WATT: No. The government should not force anything on the Indian community. The Indian country needs to make their own decisions, and bureaucrats in Washington shouldn't be dictating how the Indians handle and manage their lands, their schools, their jobs, their opportunities. That should be their privilege, not the government dictating one thing or another.

PAM CHIBITTY (NATIVE AMERICAN COALITION): I think that Secretary Watt's background is extremely limited when it comes to Indian people. He does not -- you know, it's very obvious from his statements today, it's very obvious that he's not knowledgeable of the federal trust relationship between the federal government and the Indian people. He doesn't realize why he's singling out native Americans in regard to being in a dependency. There is all other kinds of people; there's businesses. Look at Chrysler: you know, they're dependent on the federal government. So I can't understand why he would single out the native American, especially when it's a totally different type of relationship.

KOPPEL: When we return, we'll talk with four Indian leaders about Secretary Watt's remarks, about the furor they've ignited and about the very real problems confronting American Indian communities.

* * * * *

KOPPEL: There are more than 260 Indian reservations scattered across the country. Tonight we'll talk to the leaders of three. The Navajo tribe is the nation's largest, and its 25,000 acre reservation spreads from Arizona into New Mexico and Utah. Joining us from Albuquerque, New Mexico, is Peterson Zah, Chairman of the Navajo Nation. The Rosebud Sioux Reservation is located in south central South Dakota. Rosebud Sioux President Carl Waln joins us from our Denver affiliate, KBTB. From the Florida Everglades is the reservation of the Seminole Tribe. Joining us from our Miami affiliate, WPLG, is Seminole Chairman James Billie. And with us here in Washington is Ron Andrade, Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians.

Mr. Billie, I'd like to begin with you, because at one point today you called for the resignation of Chairman Watt -- not Chairman Watt, of Secretary Watt. Since then you've had occasion to change your mind. Why?

JAMES BILLIE (SEMINOLE TRIBAL CHAIRMAN): About two hours ago I had a -- I was listening to one of the conversations that he had. I think it was an interview somewhere in Tulsa. And before I heard this, the news media approached me and told me

the different type situation that Secretary Watt had said. But as it turned out, when I saw the interview it appeared to me that his conversation was taken out of context. And some of the things that Secretary Watt had indicated there is existing on the reservations.

KOPPEL: Such as?

BILLIE: Such as high unemployment. Like in my particular reservation there's approximately 47 percent. We have a different type of illnesses that's on the reservation; it's probably higher than anyplace else. He was talking about alcoholism; we do have our share of problems with it. The other things that he was talking about, they all fall into place.

KOPPEL: All right. He reached certain conclusions about that; I'm wondering whether you agree with those conclusions. He found that to be the result of a form of socialism, where the American government is doing certain things for the Indian nations which he seems to believe they ought to be doing for themselves.

BILLIE: I don't understand the entire question, what you're saying, but I believe there's a certain amount of problems that we have on the reservations that somewhere down the line the bureaucratic system has failed to help us or help each other get into this modern day and age. And I know that somewhere -- like socialism that he was talking about -- we've confined ourselves to the reservations, where we should be going out and integrating a little bit more but maintaining our culture at the same time.

KOPPEL: All right. Let's jump around the country quickly, and let's go first of all to Peterson Zah, who represents the Navajo Nation. Do you agree, first of all, with what you've heard so far? State your own opinion, Mr. Zah, would you please?

PETERSON ZAH (NAVAJO TRIBE CHAIRMAN): Well, I was really disturbed at what the Secretary has said, quite disturbed because it comes from a federal official, a federal administrator, who has a big huge responsibility in looking after the Indian people in this country. And as Secretary of Interior he is charged by law to look after our resources, the people, our water routes and our land. And I was --

KOPPEL: All right. Let me just -- let me interrupt you for a moment to find out what it is that he said that upset you. Do you take issue with some of the problems he claims exist on many of the reservations?

ZAH: I think mainly the attitude more than anything else -- attitude because I think there is certain interest group

that he is pushing this administration in terminating many of the Indian reservation that has been in dispute for several years. And we're disturbed because there seems to be some attitude that's taking a similar role as what it has in the past.

KOPPEL: All right. Now, we're in agreement, aren't we, Mr. Zah, that he didn't actually call for the abolition of the reservations. But do you see anything in what he did say that leads you to believe that's what he wants?

ZAH: Yes, I do.

KOPPEL: What?

ZAH: If you look at the text of his speech, or the interview, he alludes to some degree of trust responsibility, where he is essentially saying that perhaps the federal government should not be -- or should not have a role in having such a tremendous role on the reservation, as far as the trust responsibility is concerned.

KOPPEL: All right. I just want to keep on going around. Let me go to Carl Waln of the Rosebud Sioux. Pick up with what we've covered so far. With what do you agree, with what do you disagree?

CARL WALN (ROSEBUD SIOUX NATION PRES.): Okay, Ted, I'd like to begin by thanking ABC News and the American public for allowing the tribal Indian governments to have their perspective aired and their voice heard.

We had a tribal council meeting today on our reservation, and one of the things that some of the elders have brought out was the fact that when Watt talks about the social problems and the diseases and the health problems he cited that these were not here before 1492, and a lot of these things we have inherited from the dominant culture. I see this statement and this release as a political ploy type thing on the part of the Secretary.

KOPPEL: To do what?

WALN: Well, I think it's another move toward termination; I think it's a move that concerns environmental issues, concerns our land, concerns our resources. And I think this is the underlying meaning behind this.

KOPPEL: Ron Andrade, you're the executive director of the National Congress of American Indians. Interpret all of that for me. Why would it be to the advantage of the Reagan administration, or why would they think it to be to their advantage, if somehow reservations were disbanded?

RON ANDRADE (CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS): Well, of course most of the tribes are concerned that if they were disbanded the land would automatically come up for sale. Tribes could never -- or the individual member could never pay the tax rates, the other kind of costs that would happen once the tribe lands were dispersed to individual members.

Additionally, the oil companies and mineral interests would immediately go in and start to buy up the individual lots from the individual members. This is a part of our history from the 1800s, and so many of the tribes are very fearful that the breakup of the land and the breakup of the governments would mean total loss of the lands and, as a result, the loss of our culture.

KOPPEL: All right. I should interject at this point that we invited Secretary Watt, indeed we invited someone from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to come join us on our program this evening. We can only regret that they chose not to.

Let me come back to you, though, Mr. Andrade. He didn't say that, did he? I mean, he didn't call for the breakup of the reservations -- I mean Secretary Watt. Do you believe that that, however, is either policy or the intended policy of this administration?

ANDRADE: No, I don't think we've been able to pinpoint anything, other than maybe feelings on parts of some of the people. The recent announcements made by the President on January 14 we felt were beginning to strengthen our relationship with the federal government. We didn't see anything particular in the interview with Mr. Watt, at least from his side, that seemed to be an indication. I would not hold the same feeling for Mr. Howard Phillips; he seemed to be more interested in seeing a breakup of the reservations.

KOPPEL: He's the Chairman of the Conservative Caucus, who was conducting the interview.

ANDRADE: Yes, and he seemed to be -- and his questions seemed to be very loaded to try to get an answer from Mr. Watt that would lead to a statement saying, we should break up the reservations and get rid of the socialistic programs.

KOPPEL: Was there anything, indeed, in that interview that offended you?

ANDRADE: If anything was, I believe it was the -- our feeling was the attitude of Mr. Phillips and the other interviewers. Those kind of statements we believe were an attempt to try to draw out a statement, and maybe seen as a trial balloon by the conservatives, to see whether or not -- how many Americans

would buy these kind of answers, would buy this kind of questioning, against Indians. I think their attitude is the most offensive thing I think we got from this interview.

KOPPEL: Mr. Zah, do you -- what did you find most offensive?

ZAH: Well, we're more concerned about the lack of policy on the part of this administration. In other words, there is no Reagan policy on American Indians or native Americans in this country. And in absence of a clear-cut policy in terms of how they're going to deal with these programs, you have somebody like a secretary saying and doing all these things. And we have been quite concerned about that.

KOPPEL: Well, I mean, what kind of a policy do you think Secretary Watt is trying to impose, if indeed he is? Some of the things he said sounded, on the face of it, to be quite sympathetic to problems faced by many of the Indian nations.

ZAH: Well, I think many of those things that he is saying right now -- for example, the social program that he indicated -- there are some problems on the reservation. This administration had a chance to see if they can help us with some of those problems, but instead -- for example, he mentions the unemployment. On the Navajo Reservation the Reagan administration has saw fit to pull back \$152 million during the year 1982, and at the same time they're complaining that there is such a high unemployment rate and that the tribal government ought to do something about it.

KOPPEL: What is the unemployment rate on your reservation?

ZAH: About 75 percent unemployment rate now.

KOPPEL: And what about -- let's take a look at the Rosebud Sioux Reservation. What's the unemployment rate there?

WALN: The last figures that came out of our planning office, Ted, were around 80 percent.

KOPPEL: And the Seminoles?

BILLIE: Forty-seven percent.

KOPPEL: And Mr. Andrade, on a national basis, are you able to put a number to it?

ANDRADE: Well, the Bureau of Indian Affairs estimates approximately about a 55 percent unemployment rate.

KOPPEL: And does that have to do largely with the fact that Indians choose to stay on reservations or are clannish, as some people would suggest? Or does it have to do with the fact that you have a very difficult time getting off the reservations and finding jobs? Any one of you can pick up on that.

ANDRADE: Well, Ted, we don't think it's because we choose to stay on the reservations, that it's anything of that nature. After 200 years with bureau domination, there's no industry, no private sector industry; there's not sufficient jobs on the reservation that they could have created, helped create with the tribes. They've not given tribal support -- the tribes the support they needed to create jobs on the reservation, and as a result, we have a high unemployment rate.

KOPPEL: And yet the way Secretary Watt puts it, he's suggesting that the very fact that the government has intruded too much over the last few years into Indian life has brought the state of affairs to where it is today.

ANDRADE: Well, I don't think the tribes have been asking for a handout; they've been asking for a hand. They said, help us develop the jobs, help us develop the industry. Instead the government has usually held back the tribes from doing that because of no assistance. And I think if the tribes had the proper assistance from the federal government we would have had many, many more jobs on the reservation.

KOPPEL: In a word, then, what is it you would like to see from the Reagan administration? Let's -- we have only about a minute left. I'd like to whip around very quickly. Mr. Zah, what would you like to say?

ZAH: Probably more funding to the Indian reservation, with less strings attached to those dollars.

KOPPEL: Mr. Waln?

WALN: One thing the Secretary has said, and the President also has stated, that they want to deal directly with tribal governments. It will be a government-to-government relationship. And we agree with this, and they have agreed with it. And we feel that the funds channeled directly to the tribal government, we would be able to develop our own resources and provide employment for the reservation.

KOPPEL: All right. We have time enough only for you, Mr. Billie.

BILLIE: I would like to go ahead and acquire some land near larger cities, where I can get my people out of the swamps and get to where the jobs are. And I've been quite successful in

some areas to this day -- and with some oppositions. And now, with the 47 percent unemployment, I think by going out closer to the city areas and putting my reservation there, I can slow down the unemployment rate.

KOPPEL: All right. Mr. Billie, Mr. Andrade, Mr. Waln, Mr. Zah, thank you all. When we return, we'll see what life is like at the Rosebud Sioux Reservation and how the people who live on it feel about Secretary Watt's remarks.

* * * * *

KOPPEL: When reports of Secretary Watt's controversial interview first surfaced yesterday, the news spread through Indian communities like so much wildfire, and so did the anger and resentment. It's clear that many Indians agree with Watt on two points: that they should have a freer hand to govern themselves, and that they're plagued by serious social problems. Where they disagree with Secretary Watt is on where to place the blame. Jerry King reports from Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

(FILM SHOWN)

JERRY KING: He is a Sioux Indian; his name is Crazy Horse. His wife is a full-blooded niece of the legendary Indian chief. Together they, some of their 12 children and some of their grandchildren live just outside Pine Ridge, South Dakota. There is no running water in their trailer. It is not an easy life.

DAVID LONG (CRAZY HORSE): A lot of persons living in a small room, and not very much to eat. And now this alcoholics comes into the picture (sic). And I guess that is true all over the world, but as far as our Indian reservation, there is really nothing to do, especially the younger people.

G. WAYNE TAPIO (COUNCIL MEMBER): This is about the worst -- expert I ever seen, because Watt's never came here, he never asked anybody, he never listened.

KING: A special meeting of the Oglalo Sioux Tribal Council today interpreted Watt as pushing Indian integration with the rest of America, which they see as endangering their very existence as a Sioux nation.

JOHN STEELE (OGLALO SIOUX COUNCIL): Termination, as advocated by Secretary Watt, is genocide and, if continued or carried out against Indian people, makes President Reagan and the Secretary of Interior, James Watt, as guilty as Adolph Hitler in committing acts of genocide.

MARIO GONZALEZ (INDIAN ATTORNEY): We want to be left as a separate and distinct people, but yet we want to live and get along with everybody.

KING: Many on this reservation agree with Watt that alcoholism is rampant and so is drug abuse, that unemployment at 70 to 85 percent is horrendous, housing and medical facilities are terrible. But they feel these problems were exacerbated by Washington.

Sioux Indian leaders here on the Pine Ridge Reservation acknowledge the social problems prevalent among their tribe, but they say the fault is not with the system of reservations but rather with the way the reservations are administered by the federal government.

This is the Sioux Indians' national anthem. It is not a war chant, but there is certainly a feeling here that General Custer is alive and well in Washington. Jerry King, for Nightline, on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

(END FILM)

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KOPPEL: That's our report on Nightline for tonight. For all of us here at ABC News, this is Ted Koppel in Washington. Good night.

USA TODAY

OPINION

John Seigenthaler, Editorial Director
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JAMES WATT

Guest columnist

U.S. tries to build tribal self-sufficiency

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Most presidents in this century have named committees to "study" problems of Indians. Many have resolved to "help" them. A few have truly tried to be sensitive to the plight of native Americans who are caught in a cultural vise of values in conflict. But, finally, almost every administration has given lip service to superficial solutions. And the country has continued to ignore tragic conditions that cause frustration and hopelessness among the majority of its 1.4 million Indians, 735,000 of whom live on reservations.

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Watt survives because his value to Reagan outweighs his liability

By AARON EPSTEIN
Herald Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — He's gone and done it again, that pugnacious Cabinet member known to his enemies as "the Darth Vader of the administration."

Secretary of the Interior James Gaius Watt, who last year promised his mother not to provoke so many fights, has triggered renewed fury with his inflammatory rhetoric.

First, in a television interview aired Wednesday, he called the American Indian reservations "an example of the failures of socialism." Then in a Business Week article, he likened the tactics of the "hard-line left" in the environmental movement to Nazi and Russian tyranny.

Despite the outcry generated by such remarks, Watt manages to survive — and thrive. The reason is that he remains more of a political asset than a political liability to President Reagan.

"Getting rid of Watt wouldn't make the environmentalists love Reagan more, but it would make the conservatives love him less," observed Austin Ranney, a political scientist at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a conservative research group.

While Watt's aides were busy Thursday explaining to reporters and angry Indian leaders what the interior secretary "really meant," the White House appeared to take little notice.

A White House official said Watt retains the full confidence of the President and remains secure in his Cabinet post.

Almost since he took office two years ago, Watt has polarized Americans with his conservative environmental policies and his knack for hyperbole.

He once referred to environmentalists as "elitists and extremists." He warned Jewish liberals that U.S. support for Israel could be jeopardized if they continued to oppose his energy policies, such as expanding offshore oil drilling and mining coal on public lands.

He was caught spending \$6,000 in tax money for private parties, triggering a flap that evaporated when the Republican National Committee picked up the tab.

And he once remarked: "I never use the words Republicans and Democrats. It's liberals and Americans."

News Analysis

Watt's latest statements echo the beliefs of many Republican conservatives and irritate people who oppose Reagan policies anyway.

"Watt has the great confidence of the President, who agrees with what he is doing," AEI's Ranney said. "And Watt has the very strong support of the conservatives, who have gotten more and more disenchanted with Reagan. For the President to get rid of Watt would be the last straw for the conservatives."

Moreover, as a Republican Party official said recently, Watt "may raise Cain but he also raises coin."

The controversial interior secretary has been a popular draw at political events and has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for GOP candidates.

Also, Watt remains a firm Reagan loyalist who believes he helps the President by drawing much of the political heat to himself.

"I would walk the plank for him [Reagan] anytime," Watt has said. "I see myself as a lightning rod for the President. Every Cabinet has one or more lightning rods."

Reagan's recent decline in popularity is not Watt's fault, Ranney said, but a result of the sagging economy and the public's perception that the President doesn't have the answers.

"What Watt is doing is not a very significant factor," Ranney said.

To environmental leaders, though, Watt's survival is both an absurdity and a rallying cry.

"It's unbelievable to us," said the National Audubon Society vice president Brock Evans. "There must be people in the White House who share his views. That's why he's not being muzzled."

Commenting on the Business Week interview, Interior press aide Harmon Kallman said Watt was saying that a "grass roots movement, no matter how well intentioned, can get out of hand and bully their opponents.... He's not confusing environmentalists with the awful people who were responsible for those dreadful things in Europe."

Dick Williams

Diogenes never met James Watt, truth-teller

Nobody, not Anne Gorsuch, not Jesse Helms, not Larry McDonald, not Richard Nixon, angers the quiche-eaters and baby-seals-and-bunnies crowd like James Watt.

I have hereby decided that Watt is foremost on my list of truth-tellers. He hasn't minced a word yet, ending for now the centuries-old search of Diogenes for an honest man. Go on to bed, Diobaby, your search is over. Get a decade's sleep.



The Interior secretary, quiet and lawyerly though he may be, sends cartoonists and socialist commentators into red-dened rages. He wants, they say, to cut down all the trees, pave the beaches, dig for oil in national parks, put a cable car down the Grand Canyon and starve Bambi.

Not only that, they say, he's so cocksure. Why the man goes so far as not to apologize for his statements! In an age when politicians try calling taxes "revenue enhancements" or

"user fees on income" James Watt is a vital truth-teller.

And the way things have gone in Washington since Lyndon Johnson, isn't it time we had a fox in the henhouse? We're laying far too many eggs for even Cool Hand Luke to eat.

It's questionable whether anyone from east of the Mississippi River could ever understand Watt. He is a product of the Sagebrush Rebellion, born of the Western states where a majority of land is held forever wild by the federal government.

While we are cramped for park and recreational land in the Eastern zones, the West is starved for development in its many forms. For his part, Watt the Westerner seems not to understand the need for urban parks or the preservation of parks such as the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area.

Watt's most recent sin, of course, was attacking the paternalism and self-interest that is the nation's treatment of the Indian (excuse me, Native American). Socialism, he called it. Have you heard him rebutted?

He said Indian reservations sport the highest rates nationally of divorce, drug abuse, al-

coholism and unemployment? Is anyone arguing with those facts? No. He's once again being accused of McCarthyism and gross insensitivity.

Unlike many others, Watt understands that the government's treatment of the Indian has been so shameful that we couldn't end the reservation system now if we wanted to. The Indians' gloom would be their doom.

We have lied so, broken treaties, appropriated the choice land and destroyed incentives and self-reliance. Watt wants to do better by the Indian. For this, he is called the greatest threat to the Indians' "god-given culture since smallpox."

Shortly after his nomination to Interior, Watt caused a national choking on and regurgitation of chablis and Perrier when he admitted to believing in God and the Apocalypse.

He was ridiculed and lampooned for daring to say that Planet Earth would end someday in something's lifetime. Watt is to be pitied if he ever dares utter the Pledge of Allegiance. You remember, one nation under whatisname?

The Plight Of The Indians

The United States is peopled by many races. But pity the poor Indians. The native Americans stand virtually alone and at the bottom of our society's attainments in many cases while every other group has ridden the escalator of American opportunity to great heights.

Why? When Interior Secretary James Watt tried to explain in a recent comment, his intentions were immediately twisted and distorted. He was attacked for calling attention to an unpleasant truth. Mr. Watt has come to be something of a lightning rod that is repeatedly struck not only by natural elements but by all sorts of contrived charges these days. That is likely to distract attention from the facts. But he was right.

Mr. Watt had nothing at all detrimental to say about Indians. His lament was over the way they have been treated. He spoke as a friend and champion of Indians, though some of them and others have not chosen to accept it that way.

It would be best for Indians and for America if each one were treated the same as every other person here, equal under the law, encouraged in every opportunity for personal advancement. But Indians have been treated differently from every other racial group. Because they were native Americans whose lands were in the path of United States expansion, they have been sub-

jected to a reservation system. Of the conditions afflicting 735,000 Indians living on 50 million acres of reservations, Mr. Watt said: "If you want an example of the failures of Socialism, don't got to Russia — come to America and go to the Indian reservations." Then he ticked off examples that all of the social problems are worse under the reservation system.

Was he criticizing Indians? Not at all. He is for them. He is against the abuse of them: "If we treated the black people in America like we're now treating the Indians... there would be a social revolution that would tear the country up. But Congress tolerates the abusive government actions on Indians. I try to liberate them and get squashed by liberal Democrats in the House of Representatives."

Even some Indian leaders have gone on the warpath against Mr. Watt, demanding his resignation, though his purpose is to aid them.

We would not take away any right accorded any Indian as a result of treaties from a past and often unjust age. But we wish every Indian could be a part of American society and opportunity, just as every other American may be, regardless of his race or origin.

Denying facts and criticizing Mr. Watt won't uplift the Indians. They have problems that are not being solved.

CHATTANOOGA NEWS-FREE PRESS

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 1983

Watt right about American disgrace

By Ralph Looney

Editor of the News

YOU'VE got to admit there's nothing shy about Interior Secretary James Watt. Leading with his chin has made him into the administration's chief punching bag, if nothing else.



Looney

He laid much of the problem at the doorstep of the Bureau of Indian Affairs bureaucracy and called attention to the enormous social problems that afflict the first Americans.

Indians, declared Watt, have been "trained through 100 years of government oppression to look to the government as the creator, as the provider, as the supplier and have not been trained to use their initiative to integrate into the American system."

Watt speaks the truth, as anyone who has spent much time on Indian reservations will testify.

In the early 1970s I spent many months reporting on the Navajos, the nation's largest Indian tribe. The 25,000-square-mile reservation that sprawls across parts of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah was and still is an island of grinding poverty in a sea of relative plenty.

The land of the Navajo was then and probably still

is an area that most Americans visualize as a Technicolor scene from a John Wayne movie, a land of vast distance and big sky and scarlet buttes and mysterious canyons. A place of beauty and serenity.

It was all of this, but it was much more.

A world of misery. A world where perhaps only a quarter of the homes had electricity, where only 15 percent had refrigeration. A world where nearly 80 percent of the population lived in homes without running water, where water frequently had to be hauled for miles over almost impassable roads.

It was a place where less than half the water available was fit to drink and only 15 percent of the homes had flush toilets.

Travel was difficult. Most roads were unpaved, often rutted or buried in sand. Most school children were herded in barracks-type quarters in boarding schools.

It was a world where nearly half of the nearly 40,000 people in the work force were without jobs, at a time when the national jobless figure averaged 5 percent.

And things were getting worse. The Navajo birthrate was twice the national figure and life expectancy was shorter. Illness was rampant.

And at that time we discovered that federal and state taxpayers were spending \$151,503,305 a year on the Navajos! Yet precious little was filtering down to the thousands of Indians scattered across the vast and unfriendly landscape.

Today, little has changed. In many respects the situation has probably grown worse, and will continue to worsen until the American people decide they want to do something to correct it.

The Navajo problem is representative of the entire Indian problem in the United States. The Indians have been wards of the government for more than a century. Each year the situation grows worse. Each year, more and more money is spent on the problem.

Watt is correct when he lays the blame on the government. Ever since it failed at exterminating

these native Americans, its policies have resulted in making them more dependent on government largess.

One basic problem, it seems to me, is that the government has never seemed able to understand the Indian and his ways, even when it made the effort.

Certainly this was true in its education system in the Navajo country which never considered that these people have utterly different cultural backgrounds from non-Indians with other beliefs and values.

To understand the Navajo you must understand that his religion is a constant striving for harmony. He is concerned about the precise relationships among all created things. They govern their entire lives with harmony. From earliest childhood they function as members of the group and are tolerant of others and their failings.

Is it any wonder they frequently experience problems living in today's aggressive world, which is offensive to them?

Government teaching methods didn't take such problems into consideration until comparatively recent times.

Watt has done a great service in pointing a spotlight on the Indian issue. The heat he is taking as a result of his forthright talk is undeserved. Ironically, the loudest complaints are coming from the native Americans themselves, who believe Watt advocates abolishing the reservations.

Watt's office says the secretary was misquoted on this, pointing out that reservations were created by treaty.

But Indian tribes have also always resisted any move to abolish the Bureau of Indian Affairs, even though it is a favorite target of Indian criticism. I doubt any such move today would be successful.

Whatever the reaction, Watt has raised an issue that has been neglected far too long. So long as it is out in the open and subject to debate, we can at least hope that new solutions will be tried.

Omaha World
Herald 1-20-83

Watt Statements Might Help

Interior Secretary James Watt has never been one to flinch at taking controversial stands.

He has become the favorite target of many of the nation's environmentalists because of statements and policies regarding use of the federally owned natural resources under his jurisdiction.

Now he has again placed himself squarely in the line of fire because of the statements made in a television interview (Satellite Program Network) about the government's treatment of Indians.

"If you want an example of the failures of socialism, don't go to Russia," Watt said. "Come to America and go to the Indian reservations."

"Every social problem is exaggerated because of socialistic government policies on the Indian reservation, because the people have been trained through 100 years of government oppression to look to the government as the creator, as the provider, as the supplier, and they have not been

trained to use ... initiative to integrate into the American system."

Watt says he would like to "liberate" the Indians and give them their rights. One of the ways he has tried to do this, he said, is to close the Indian boarding schools and provide the Indians tuition grants to attend schools of their choice.

For that effort, Watt said, liberal congressmen have tried "to squash him."

Watt's latest statements are likely to draw similar reaction, from Indians as well as from congressmen.

But few would disagree that the government's treatment of Indians on reservations has been less than a success. That treatment, according to Watt, has led to high unemployment, drug abuse, alcoholism, divorce and venereal disease.

It is time to look for new solutions. If Watt's statements succeed in getting this started, perhaps they will have served a useful purpose.

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Nancy Sales, Associate Editor—Katie Thomas, Office Manager

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Editorial . . .

Watt Order Good

Despite the cries of wilderness advocates and environmentalists, we applaud Secretary of Interior James Watt's order to release some 800,000 acres of land from wilderness status and allow them to become productive.

For too many years lands have been more and more placed in a "do not touch" status at the expense of those whose livelihood depends on land, and more and more lands have been locked up for the sheer pleasure of a few who like to tramp into such areas.

And while we agree that some lands should be untouched and remain in wilderness status, we have seen too many instances when this has been foolhardy and at the expense of too many others.

We site, for example, the Kaiparowits project which was killed before it could get off the ground because of pressures from wilderness and environmentalists groups. Kaiparowits had the potential of providing thousands of jobs and making a stable economy base for southern Utah, a region which has always lacked such a base.

Problems in Capitol Reef National Park, where the same groups have pressured to have cattle and sheep grazing phased out, have threatened to wipe out a large majority of cattle raisers in Wayne County, the very lifeblood of that area.

Throughout the nation, and especially in the west, lands have been taken out of production and placed in wilderness, mostly because of the whims of those who don't even live in the area, but want to have it as their playground.

How about those of us who live in these areas and need the lands for livelihood? This has been an area com-

pletely forgotten by many who have opposed multiple use of public lands and who advocate having lands locked up.

The giant Intermountain Power Project is another good example of environmental pressure. Originally scheduled to be in Wayne County where the water was already available and where it was close to two major coal fields, a study indicated that maybe, smoke from the plant would drift into the Capitol Reef National Park area an average of 18 days a year.

And so, the natural site for the plant was moved into a desolate region in Millard County where millions of dollars worth of water had to be purchased and taken out of farm production, and coal shipped in from areas far away from the plant.

We realize and support the idea that national parks and other such areas be protected. We are aware of the need for some wilderness. But we are also aware that the land is for man's use, and without it, there will be no life. We wonder if the environmentalists and wilderness proponents are that aware or if they all figure there is no problem if there aren't any cows because they can get milk in a plastic bottle at the supermarket.

We hope there will be more such action in the future to give southern Utah — and other areas of the west and the nation — an opportunity to use the lands for strengthening the economy and place things in their proper perspective.

The Denver Post Friday, Jan. 21, 1983

Open Forum

Just wants the facts

I AM SHOCKED and dismayed at the Jan. 10 report by your Washington Bureau reporter, Kenneth T. Walsh, on James Watt's "Meet the Press" appearance.

It is just the sort of biased attack in the name of journalism that has besmirched Watt's credibility. Walsh accuses Watt of "heavy-duty name-calling," and says he "blasted" the professional environmentalists and "glossed over" criticism of his coal-leasing program. These phrases are supplied by the reporter and have the effect of slanting a reader's perception of the issue.

When I read the news, I do so to get the facts, not some journalist's opinion.

SCOTT W. SHAW

Golden

Viewpoint

Conquiew Morning Journal

Texas

Columnists do not necessarily reflect newspaper's position

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Editorials

Watt commits no crime

Editorial writers around the country will never find a replacement for Secretary of the Interior James Watt. He is always good for something to write about.

And the adjectives Watt inspires. Outrageous. Obsessive. Inexorable. Arrogant. Devious.

Watt recently found a provision in the federal wilderness law which permitted him to make 805,000 acres of prospective wilderness land available for immediate oil drilling and commercial exploitation. Now the editorial writers are referring to "Watt's end run," "Watt's sneak attack," "Watt's rape and run." He has been dubbed "the prince of plunder."

The Sierra Club has gone into orbit, and lawyers are preparing to file injunction suits.

The facts do not justify such hysterical reaction. Suppose Watt did make an "end run" around Congress? Considering the record of the

97th Congress, it's probably just as well that he did not get that unpredictable body into the act.

For the record, the controversial 805,000 acres are not part of the 80 million acres already set aside as wilderness lands. The acreage was simply withdrawn from an additional 44 million acres which are under consideration for addition to the wilderness lands. The Board of Land Appeals of the Interior Department doubted the 805,000 acres possessed the legal qualifications to be designated as a wilderness.

If there is any real reason to object to searching for oil on the 805,000 acres, it should be based on timing. The global surplus of oil has softened prices. This is not a good time to take drilling bids from oil companies. Should there be oil anywhere on the land, it will still be there and worth more money when the glut ends, as it surely will.

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Thursday, January 20, 1983

Indian Ire Misplaced

CLEARLY evident in the reaction of some Indian leaders to Interior Secretary James Watt's remarks about socialism and reservation life is the fact that they did not read all of what he said.

Take the comment by Vincent Knight, executive director of Oklahoma Indian Legal Services, that accused Watt of trying to break up reservations and tribal control of Indian lands.

Nothing of the sort can be inferred from what Watt actually said. His point was directly to the opposite.

"I am criticizing the management of the reservations by Washington and think that we ought to let the Indians do it," he said. "Reservations are theirs and they should manage them. Nobody is trying to eliminate the reservations."

Mismanagement is, indeed, the point, said Thom Snead of the Oklahoma Choctaw tribe, who added that "anytime the government has anything to do with management of a nation like reservation Indians, they always manage to mess it up."

That agrees with Watt. Rather

than continued paternalism, the text shows Watt argued that "we ought to give them freedom. We ought to give them liberty. We ought to give them their rights."

Instead, Watt observed that for 100 years, the government has treated Indians as incompetent wards, incapable of making decisions on their reservations about development, water or land ownership.

As for the comment of Millie Giago, executive director of the Native American Center in Oklahoma City, who complained about Watt citing the high incidence of alcoholism, divorce and venereal disease among reservation Indians, since when is a Cabinet official supposed to ignore the facts? The incidence of these conditions is higher on reservations than among the population as a whole.

There's also more than a grain of truth in Watt's observation that some Indian leaders have a personal, vested interest in maintaining the status quo on reservations, which in itself explains some of the more vitriolic reactions to Watt's comments about reservation life.

*Editorial
Continues*

Daily Oklahoman
1-20-85
Continued

Socialism, U.S. Style

INTERIOR Secretary James Watt is not the first person to observe the connection between the sad plight of America's reservation Indians and the socialist system under which they have lived for more than a century.

Some of his predecessors made similar observations. And back in the 1950s, when he began his political career, Arizona's Sen. Barry Goldwater often called attention to the link between socialist failure and reservation life. — The Rea-

Anybody familiar with any of the major Indian reservations of the West knows the truth of the dismal statistics cited by Watt in a broadcast interview.

What was true a quarter-century ago is just as true today. The 735,000 American Indians on reservations hold the dubious distinction of being at the top of the list in unemployment and incidence of alcoholism, drug abuse and venereal disease.

Malnutrition, tuberculosis and other physical ailments also contribute their share to the overall miseries of reservation life.

Watt thinks all of these prob-

lems have become exaggerated on reservations because of the pure socialism that governs them.

"If you want an example of the failures of socialism," Watt said, "don't go to Russia — come to America and go to the Indian reservations."

That is not rhetorical excess. As one of the oldest federal agencies, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has been responsible for the management of reservation life. This has bred a dependence on the BIA that severely handicaps most reservation Indians and constitutes an almost insuperable obstacle to their assimilation.

It's an uneven picture, to be sure, with some tribes having accommodated themselves to the 20th century with far greater facility than others.

But decades of following a policy that the Great White Father in Washington knows best, and from him do all blessings flow, has produced a truly second-class group of citizens. And for that, congressional indifference and the bureaucracy of the BIA are largely responsible.

ment to build tribal self-sufficiency and to minimize federal interference in reser-

many of their own problems, and will contribute significantly to the resolution

The San Diego Union

Editorials

PAGE B-14

SATURDAY MORNING, JANUARY 22, 1983

Watt Is Right

As anyone would expect, critics quickly accused Interior Secretary James Watt of insensitivity and worse toward American Indians when he compared their reservations to enclaves of "terrible socialism."

Mr. Watt, nevertheless, accurately described the shameful plight of the Indians when he said this week that oppressive government dominance of the reservations has given Indians the worst health and social problems in the nation. Far from trying to interfere with the Indians' culture and other affairs, however, the Reagan administration has made it clear it wants to intrude as little as possible on the reserva-

tions.

The administration plans to accord tribal governments the same status as counties, cities and states. Moreover, Mr. Reagan intends to encourage free enterprise on the reservations.

Lessening governmental meddling in Indian affairs is long overdue. Shocking statistics show how miserably the old policies have failed.

The 735,000 Indians on 261 reservations suffer from a 40 percent unemployment rate and the average reservation Indian drops out of school after the 9th grade. The Indian suicide rate is 30 percent higher than that in the rest of the nation, and Indians die

from alcoholism at a rate 67 percent higher than the general population.

Mr. Watt might have avoided criticism if he had used more diplomatic language. But words cannot hide the fact that the old Indian policies are a scandal and some sort of reform is long overdue.

Indeed, even some Indian leaders who castigated Mr. Watt have had second thoughts and now endorse his remarks.

All the controversy aside, James Watt, in his own abrasive way, has focused public attention on a segment of our population that has been suffering too long — out-of-sight and out-of-mind.

