

I particularly welcome an opportunity to serve the Federal Government in a position as Commissioner on the Indian Claims Commission.

I am interested in continuing my law practice at some later date but I would welcome this challenge at this time.

Senator Jackson, my understanding of the task that the Indian Claims Commission has had set by the Congress is to determine specifically whether or not the Government of the United States has treated the various Indian tribes in a fair and honorable manner. The cutoff date on the claims to be filed was some 16 years ago, and to date there are over 300 claims which still have to be processed.

I assume that the reason for the addition of the three Commissioners at this time is to expedite the handling of those claims. I know of no reason why the claims cannot be handled and processed within the time period provided by the Congress.

I am entirely openminded on the subject and bring no expertise on Indian problems as such, but I believe that I am qualified for the position by my background and in the event that this committee recommends my nomination, and the Senate confirms it, I will consider it an honor to serve.

I shall be happy to answer any questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Have you had a chance to read the report accompanying the bill that we passed extending the Commission?

Mr. VANCE. Yes, sir; I have.

The CHAIRMAN. I think you put your finger on the problem. The No. 1 priority is to expedite action on these claims.

I happen to have been the author of the original Indian Claims Commission Act. I must say that we assured the Congress, long ago, that it would be completed within 10 years. That was 21 years ago.

Mr. VANCE. Before I started law school.

The CHAIRMAN. Here we are with a docket so long that it is pathetic. I must say that the committee will follow very closely the work of the Commission. This job must be finished by 1972 or there is going to be trouble. I know I speak for every member of the committee. If you read the report, you will get the mood.

Mr. VANCE. I read it with some care, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. We want justice done the Indians and I must say that the long delay in settling these claims is incredible. Your No. 1 job is to clean up that docket and do it in a judicious way so that justice is meted out to the Indians. I think a grave injustice has been rendered to the Indians by this long delay.

This is a very poor example of how to settle claims for people who have had grievances for all these years. I was pleased to hear you state that the matter of expedition is very important. I want to assure you that every member of this committee feels very strongly and very deeply about this, Mr. Vance. We expect you gentlemen to expedite these claims. We are going to be watching you, I assure you, because we are not going to put up with these delays any longer.

If you have problems, we want you to come up and talk to us about them. We will help in any way we can to clean up the Commission calendar. But we do not intend to extend the time of the Commission again, nor do we expect such a request from the Commission.

I appreciate having your comments.