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### The Northern Cheyennes Move Ahead Under Self-Help Programs

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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September 19, 1962

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

The Northern Cheyennes Move Ahead Under Self-Help Programs

Mr. President:

When the Area Redevelopment Act was signed into law one of its specific purposes was to provide assistance, technical and financial, to organized Indian reservation groups throughout the country. While these areas have a great deal of human and natural resources they have never been fully realized for one reason or another. The Area Redevelopment Act has proven to be an incentive in moving along the various programs of self-help and improvement that have been discussed on these reservations for so many years.

Montana has seven Indian reservations, where conditions exist from one extreme to another. Each reservation has qualified for assistance under ARA and has been so designated. The over-all economic development plans for several of these reservations have been approved.

The one reservation area in Montana which has pleased me the most in its progress under these economic aid programs has been the Northern Cheyenne Indians. These Indian people live in southeastern Montana. There are few visible resources in the land area. But these people are proud people; they have complained less and have asked for less than the vast majority of ethnic groups who exist under limited circumstances.

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The Northern Cheyennes have been aware for sometime that if they were to prosper and survive as an Indian group they have to develop their resources, devise some means of economic livelihood and protect their own interests. In recent years the pattern on many of our Indian reservations throughout the nation has been a gradual sale of Indian owned lands. Today these reservations are a checker board of trust, patent in fee and non-Indian lands. Thus, they were gradually losing control of their reservation lands.

The Northern Cheyenne Indians have not permitted this. In recent years the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council, under the able guidance of its President, John Woodenlegs, has purchased all land advertized for sale whenever possible with the limited funds that were available. Many advocates of early termination of Federal control over the reservations have promoted the dissipation of reservation units into the hands of outsiders. This the Northern Cheyenne people have not done. The area of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation is still quite intact. Just recently many years of hard work were realized when the Bureau of Indian Affairs approved two revolving credit loans to the Northern Cheyennes. Last year the Congress appropriated funds to help replenish the Revolving Credit Fund. My colleague, Senator Lee Metcalf, a number of our associates and I have urged for many years that this fund be put back into operation so that needy Indian tribes would have an adequate loan program available to them for tribal development.

The Northern Cheyenne Tribe has been approved for a \$500,000 loan with which they will undertake an extensive land purchase program as a means of getting greater use of Indian lands now and in the future. They also have

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received favorable consideration for a \$950,000 loan for a tribal livestock enterprise. The livestock program will not be actively underway until next spring. This livestock enterprise will provide employment, a new source of income, and ultimately it will be instrumental in further use of irrigable lands on the reservation as a source of feed for the livestock.

The loan assistance comes directly from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Northern Cheyenne Tribe has also submitted an over-all economic development plan to the Area Redevelopment Administration. The OEDP has been approved and the Northern Cheyennes are now proceeding to study and implement individual project proposals.

The greatest potential on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation undoubtedly lies in the development of enterprises appealing to the tourists. The Northern Cheyennes are also renewing an interest in arts and crafts, an area well suited to these people and one that holds some promise. This past year there has been a noticeable increase of traffic on the U. S. highway which crosses the reservation. Recent visits to the Northern Cheyenne Reservation by interested persons indicates a considerable potential.

What I have said thus far has been most encouraging, but the Northern Cheyennes have a long way to go, there are a multitude of problems. These people and their leaders have indicated a willingness to try and do something to help themselves. I believe that if they receive the necessary assistance and guidance from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Department of Interior and the Area Redevelopment Administration, the Northern Cheyenne Indians will move forward.

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At this point I wish to make note of the recent untimely death of LaVerne Madigan of the Association on American Indian Affairs. LaVerne Madigan had been of great service to the Indian tribes of Montana, particularly the Northern Cheyennes. People of this caliber can be of great service to the Indian people.