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The Horse is Still Kicking

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE  
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THE HORSE IS KICKING STILL

Mr. METCALF. Mr. President, since the Nixon administration decided to close 50 Job Corps centers, including the Kicking Horse Center near Ronan, Mont., and pledged to provide "constructive alternatives" for the trainees affected, the senior Senator from Montana (Mr. MANSFIELD) and I have been working hard to insure that the alternative in Montana is "constructive."

The Kicking Horse Job Corps center is the only Job Corps center truly oriented to the training of Indian youth. Montanans were happy with it and it seemed to be on the threshold of its greatest contribution. Either the administration did not know that, or, if it knew, did not choose to consider it when the order was issued to close the centers. Kicking Horse will be "phased out" as a Job Corps center on June 30.

Senator MANSFIELD and I felt that the decision was unacceptable. So did hundreds of Montanans, including the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation on which the center is located. We began to convey the concern of Montanans to the authorities.

As a result, the Department of Labor has proposed to establish the "Northwest Indian Manpower Skills Center" to operate in the Kicking Horse facilities. Senator MANSFIELD and I still are concerned about the proposal and we want now to enter into the Record communications that express our concern and in which we receive certain assurances.

I ask unanimous consent that copies of correspondence between Senator MANSFIELD, me, and the Labor Department be printed in the Record.

There being no objection, the correspondence was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER,

The PRESIDENT,
The White House,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I was deeply disturbed to read in today's newspapers, April 10, that the Administration plans to close a large number of Job Corps camps on very short notice. If these reports are accurate, and this is the only source of information I have, the action seems to have been taken without proper consultation with the Congress and the personnel in the field who are responsible for administering the Job Corps camps.

Sudden closing of the three camps in my State has brought immediate pleas from Anaconda, Hamilton, Ronan, and other points in western Montana. This sudden decision will spread disillusionment among recruits whose training is abruptly terminated and will be a disappointment and economic blow to thousands of communities not only in Montana but the entire Nation. These people have worked hard to make camps in their area a success. What started out in many instances to be a rather difficult situation has developed into a fine working relationship between all concerned.
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

HON. MIKE MANSFIELD, U.S. SENATE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR MANSFIELD: Following a visit of a Department of Labor evaluation team to Montana, we have developed a plan for the constructive disposition of the Kicking Horse Job Corps facility. 

1. The Kicking Horse Job Corps facility will be phased out as of the end of June 1969.
2. The existing facilities will be used to establish a new Northwest Manpower Skills Center. This center will be funded from the MDTA account administered by the Department of Labor. We hope that the center will be administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in cooperation with the Department of Labor.
3. The new Center will have a capacity of 190. It will be devoted to the training of Indian youth. The clientele will be drawn from the Northwest region, in cooperation with Region VI of the Manpower Administration. (The regional headquarters currently is located in Butte, Montana, but is scheduled to move to Denver.)

I have directed the Regional Manpower Administrator, in cooperation with the various States, to initiate an extensive survey of occupational needs in the area to determine the trainees plan to follow returning training. This survey will then be used to change the range of skills for which training is presently offered at the Center. Currently, the Center offers only a few skills and provides access to only limited opportunities in the labor market.

4. I have directed my staff to commence discussions with the Concentrated Employment Program (CEP) in Butte, Montana to modify the boundaries of the CEP to incorporate the Blackfoot and Flathead reservations. This will permit the training center to draw upon the facilities of the CEP in providing orientation and placement support.

5. I have directed our staff to conduct discussions with officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to determine the willingness of the Bureau to administer the new Northwest Regional Indian Manpower Skills Center. In addition, by establishing a Center designed to serve the needs of Indians, I understand that the BIA will be the prime source for their needs and to ensure that the Center will move to labor markets where job opportunities are available.

6. It is significant to note that the planned Northwest Center draws on the services of the Department of Labor in working with BIA for the establishment of a training center for Indians at Ft. Lincoln, North Dakota, and other locales. However, the Ft. Lincoln project is designed to serve Indian families as a unit, while the new Center will focus on the needs and occupational requirements of Indian men and women.

I will keep you posted as our plans are moved forward, but the above spells out the specific approach that we intend to follow with regard to a contractive program to serve a group that has been characterized by major problems of employment in the past.

Sincerely,

ARNOLD R. WEBER, Assistant Secretary for Manpower.

May 15, 1969.

HON. ARNOLD R. WEBER, Assistant Secretary for Manpower, Department of Labor, Labor Building, Washington, D.C.

DEAR SECRETARY WEBER: We would like to convey to you certain misunderstandings that have
been expressed to us by persons who attended your staff planning sessions for the development of the Northwest Indian Manpower Program.

You will recall that the Skills Center is an MDTA program proposed by your department for implementation in the facilities of the Kicking Horse Job Corps Center, near Ronan, Montana, after the Job Corps Center is phased out.

We share the misgivings,Chiefly, we understand, it as the Department of Labor's intention to fund the Manpower Skills Center for only one year.

Question. Are we to understand from this that the center is to operate for only one year?

Question. If not, what does the Department of Labor propose as future sources of revenue?

We have been told that the Department of Labor is now considering turning over the operation of the Skills Center to the Bureau of Indian Affairs after the first year.

Question. If that is true, why can't the Bureau of Indian Affairs become the planning and administering agency at once?

Secondly, the Kicking Horse Job Corps Center is the training of a specific age group, ranging from late teens to early twenties. We understand the new center will be for all ages. It seems to us to be a highly inappropriate policy to mix hardened unemployables with young men of high school age embarking on a training program.

Question. Is it not possible to direct your recruitment policies to young men?

Thirdly, there were mutual benefits from the program operated at the Kicking Horse Job Corps Center. For example, you've being trained in the operation of heavy equipment, performed useful road and trail clearing, achieved work on the Flathead Indian Reservation, where the Center is located.

Question. Will this policy of mutual benefits continue at the Northwest Indian Manpower Skills Center?

From what we have heard of the planning sessions, we have the impression that there are men in your department who have little stake in whether the Northwest Indian Manpower Skills Center succeeds. We would like to impress upon you our high hopes for the development of a continuing and acceptable to the community, and devoted to the training of Indian youth in an environment where they will feel comfortable.

That was the unique benefit of the Job Corps Center, and has the Administration been fit to close? We want very much for the Northwest Indian Manpower Skills Center to fill this critical need. We trust that you will be able to reply favorably and in detail to our questions and hope that you will keep us informed of the Center takes shape.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,
MANNFELD, Mr. President.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR MANPOWER,
WASHINGTON, D.C.
May 23, 1969.

Mr. MANSFIELD, Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. METCALF. I am glad to yield to the senior Senator from Montana.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I will therefore, in behalf of my distinguished colleague, and the Senate, present a resolution in behalf of the Northwest Indian Manpower Skills Center on the Flathead Reservation in Western Montana.

Therefor, the Senate is apprised that my distinguished colleague from Montana, Mr. Metcalfe, appeared to me that in conjunction with the Department of Labor and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, we have been able to work out a situation that will be of tremendous benefit to our Indian population, and in so doing, I am happy to announce that at least a segment of our Indian population, which in our opinion is the most neglected minority in the United States, will be kept alive on an expanded basis, with its life assured over years to come.

Mr. President, the future and the administration of the Job Corps program has generated a great deal of discussion between the halls of Congress, as well as among our constituents. The question before us is whether our jurisdiction over the program to the Department of Labor is a matter which has been accomplished by executive authority. There are some of us who believe in both for and against this decision.

The more recent announcement about the closing and realigning of many Job Corps centers generated a considerable opposition. The Job Corps was one of the programs under the Office of Economic Opportunity which got off to a rocky start. Most of the centers have now become popular and well accepted by local communities and they have done a great deal for a number of disadvantaged Indians. Several Job Corps centers, two under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service and one under the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Quite frankly, in the face of the severe cutback, I anticipated Montana might lose one of its centers. However, when the announcement was made, my colleague, Senator MIKE MANSFIELD, and Representative ARNOLD OLSON and I were disturbed to learn that the one to be closed in Montana was the Kicking Horse Job Corps Center at Ronan. This is a very unique center, that a majority of its enrollees are Indian youth, being trained on an Indian reservation. It is the only center which was concentrating on Indian youth. A group deserving of all the help they can get. The center has a very good record of cost per trainee, and its placement record competes favorably with all other programs.

Since the original announcement about the closing, there have been a number of discussions with the Department of Labor, and I believe that they are now considering that this center will not be abandoned. This Job Corps center has now been converted to the North-
west Indian Manpower Skills Center. The center will be funded through the Department of Labor in cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the State of Montana. This center will serve the educational and training needs of Indians in my State and the surrounding area. The center will provide a unique opportunity to assist Indians who are in need of employable skills. This center will be operated within the Indian community, thus making the program more attractive and successful to the Indian youth. I am convinced this center can make a major contribution, and the Montana congressional delegation wants to see it succeed, as I am sure all interested Federal agencies do. This is a rare opportunity on which we can expand and improve a program of assistance which is long overdue, insofar as our Indian people are concerned. My colleague, Senator METCALF, has had printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a series of letters which document the establishment of the Northwest Indian Manpower Skills Center, a program which, I am assured, will be operated on a continuing basis.

Mr. METCALF Mr. President, as the Senator has pointed out, this center is going to be an all-Indian center, a center that is above and beyond some of the Job Corps prospectives. We have been assured this is not to be a 1-year affair or a phasing out program, but that it will be a permanent and continuous training area for the long neglected Indian population of America.