6-21-1974

Letter to Tom Judge concerning Flathead Indians

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
Honorable Tom Judge
Governor
State of Montana
Helena, Montana 59601

Dear Tom:

We have had staff reports on the meeting held in your office in Helena on Friday, June 14th, to discuss the general subject of problems arising from jurisdictional disputes on Indian Reservations. These discussions were open and frank and contributed a great deal to bringing about a better understanding of the issues. We are most pleased that you and Lt. Governor Bill Christiansen participated.

Immediate establishment of a Task Force on State Indian Relations is an excellent idea and could prove to be the necessary vehicle to determine problem areas and how they can best be resolved. Task Force should be composed of agency heads within state government, who are associated with our Indian residents. Problems arising from jurisdictional disputes on our seven Indian Reservations are complex and will require considerable negotiation. It must be recognized that each of the seven Reservations are governmental entities within themselves and should be treated accordingly. The tribal governments under Public Law 280 and the Civil Rights Act Amendments do have the authority to negotiate and it is incumbent upon all parties involved that they should do so. We believe that this can best resolve any potentially difficult situations.

There are three areas of responsibility and we offer the following recommendations to the Task Force on State Indian Relations:

1. The State of Montana should determine areas of conflict and negotiate solutions to these problems with each of the Reservations. There is existing authority and it has been done elsewhere.
2. Determine which matters can only be resolved by court litigation.
3. Establish areas that must have legislative action in the Congress or Montana Legislature prior to implementation.
Honorable Tom Judge

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Many of the existing problems have been brought about by misunderstanding and we believe that the best solution would be negotiations between parties directly concerned.

With best personal wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Mike Mansfield, U.S.

Lee Metcalf, U.S.S.