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THRU: Dr. Benjamin E. McBrayer, Indian Health Area Director
and Dr. Erwin S. Rabau, Director, Division of Indian Health

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Formal Protest Concerning Disallowed Use of Travel Fund

Because during two past Area administrations of Indian Health (namely, those of I. J. Jarin, D. D. S., and Benjamin E. McBrayer, M. D.) there has been a serious lack of appreciation for the value of consultant Public Information Services, this protest is made by the Area Public Information Specialist. It is to outline one specific instance, the circumstances under which travel was done by the Public Information Specialist under "Authorization to Attend Non-Government Sponsored Meeting" (Form 99) during travel fund curtailment, and the inability of the Indian Health Area Director to correct this when funds were made available and Travel Voucher (Form 1012) was submitted for the travel.

During November 1966 all travel funds were withdrawn from the accounts of all Program and Branch Chiefs in the Indian Health Area Office. This was, all were told, a Bureau of the Budget mandate and generally accepted. Priority travel was outlined and Public Information Services activities eliminated if they required travel.

It was a most crucial time for Indian Health. Area Public Information Specialist proceeded with her work, traveled in good faith at her own expense, convinced that the work was pertinently worthwhile even if there were no money for it. She was willing to sign a request to travel at her own expense if this were necessary to obtain permission of her Supervisor, the Indian Health Area Director. The papers were prepared by the Executive Officer and signed by both Area Public Information Specialist and Indian Health Area Director.

In July 1966 the amount of \$600. had been allowed and approved for Fiscal Year travel of the Area Public Information Specialist. Through November the recorded obligation had totaled \$174., leaving balance of \$426. The November travel not submitted totaled \$92. When on December 5 she was informed that the sum of \$150. had been granted for her travel for the balance of the year, she promptly, December 6, submitted Travel Voucher covering the \$92., November travel to Tulsa and to Tahlequah Service Unit which she had done on her own.

This Travel Voucher was returned to her by the Indian Health Area Director with a route slip notation: "This travel that was authorized on a Form 99 (11-7-66) at no expense to government during a period when we were completely restricted from travel. I have no authority to approve now."

This is not to question veracity of IHAD, but to use this specific incident to show the importance of this travel and some of why the Area Public Information Specialist thought that it was justified even if she had to pay for it herself; and why she in good faith submitted the Travel Voucher since there is a balance beyond the amount required to cover her November travel.

Area Public Information Specialist had planned November travel to provide an exhibit at Oklahoma Health and Welfare Association conference; also to help with "Indian Breakfast," an informational activity which is a part of this annual conference; and to work in the Tahlequah and Claremore Service Units contacting newspapers and also setting up publicity to explain two programs --- Health Records and Nutrition and Dietetics --- in local newspapers and in planned issues of "Talking Leaves," the Area illustrated newsletter for tribal leaders, officials of related agencies, and interested PHS employees.

For ten years the office of Information Services has provided an exhibit for Oklahoma Health and Welfare Association Conference. Most years these are in Oklahoma City, and occasionally in Tulsa. The exhibits over these years have portrayed the services of Nursing; Environmental Health (both Construction and Services); Program Analysis; Health Records; Social Service, etc. etc.

Also, at this conference there is an annual informational activity called "Indian Breakfast." At this affair Bureau of Indian Affairs and Public Health Service cooperate to inform the members of OHSM of the status of their mutual endeavor to serve Indians in health, education and welfare.

As a public information and public relations vehicle (integrated with one of the most important conferences held in Oklahoma), "Indian Breakfast" has served these two agencies with high level professional communication at times very needful in Indian affairs in Oklahoma. November 1966 was no exception, and perhaps as crucial a period as Indian Health has had in its ten years' history.

For the first time a BIA official was President of OHSM Association. This was Mr. Howard Walkingstick, BIA Director of Social Services, Anadarko Area. He needed substantial showing of Division of Indian Health support and cooperation. Also, Public Health Service was in need of extra awareness on part of health officials of the special requirements to qualify a medical social worker. November "Talking Leaves" had been edited particularly to point up the ways in which Bureau of Indian Affairs and Public Health Service cooperate to serve Indians in a field such as family planning.

The interest in the Indian Health Medical Social Service exhibit during the conference justified the planning and the work which had gone into it.

While near the Tahlequah Service Unit, the Area Public Information Specialist set up the groundwork for publicity which had been planned with Health Records. The background for this type work also needs to be understood.

For some years the Area Public Information Specialist has been cultivating free-lance writers in communities where the newspaper publisher, himself, did not have enough interest. Over a period of time the publisher becomes interested in Indian Health as articles appear in his own newspaper, written by a local writer in whom he has confidence.

The custom has been to provide the free-lance writer materials gathered from the Area Branch Chief and his or her Washington headquarters counterpart. With these for study and background, sometimes with written cleared statements, the reporter approaches the Service Unit Director at the PHS Indian

Hospital to interview the Service Unit counterpart of the particular Branch. After the story is published in the local newspaper, the materials are reprinted in "PHS Personals," mimeograph supplement to "Talking Leaves." Sometimes a photograph and cutline are provided in this manner for "Talking Leaves," giving the newspaper credit. In this way we explain programs with some variety and with more credence than when the Agency attempts to do all of its own explaining of the Indian Health programs.

In the Tahlequah section, the Area Public Information Specialist was working with a free-lance writer named Lorana Travis who writes for the Tahlequah Star-Citizen. Mrs. Travis is the wife of Vaud Travis, Head, School of Education, Northeastern State College. Materials were provided by Miss Margaret Lloyd, Chief, DIH Health Records, and Miss Tillie Rodgers, Chief, Area Health Records Branch. Mrs. Travis has since interviewed Juanita Majors, Health Records Librarian, Tahlequah, with the full support of Dr. Emerson O. Farley, Service Unit Director. Her article will appear soon.

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Also while in Tulsa we took advantage of opportunity to visit with the publishers and reporters of both Tulsa World (A M) and Tulsa Tribune (P M) and were able to keep Indian Health out of these newspapers on matters having to do with the coming of National Congress of American Indians to Oklahoma City the following week. In the weeks prior, Commissioner Bennett of BIA had visited Oklahoma City, meeting with Indian leaders. We had been able to answer questions of the reporters from the Oklahoma City papers so that unfair and unnecessary criticism of Public Health Service administration in Indian Health had been held to a minimum. Tulsa newspapers were equally interested in these matters.

The Area Public Information Specialist made it back to Oklahoma City in time to set up good publicity for Dr. Erwin S. Rabau, Chief, Division of Indian Health in two competing newspapers. These were Oklahoma City Times (P M) and Oklahoma Journal (A M). A follow-up interview of Dr. Benjamin E. McBrayer, Indian Health Area Director, was arranged and this story is to appear soon, according to Hugh Morgan, reporter on staff of Oklahoma Journal.

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That travel to Tulsa could not be covered when travel funds were available to the Public Information Specialist for the balance of the fiscal year in excess of the amount required for the Tulsa trip seems to her a mere technicality. The inability of the Indian Health Area Director to correct this and approve the use of the travel fund for above purposes is the real subject of this protest.

However, even more important is that Public Health Service should soon come to grips with the need of a trained and experienced public information specialist on the Indian Health team in the Oklahoma City Area. Examination of the results, when the Area Public Information Specialist is encouraged to work in the best way she knows how, will prove the point.

We will not here go into the disastrous results which can come when an Indian Health Area Director indulges in what industrial editors would call "non-valid publications response research" with no consultation whatsoever on the part

of the Area Public Information Specialist. We will not here attempt to review the confusion which can then come out of Administration by Committee approach in the field of Public Information and public relations.

We will report that for three years it has been almost as difficult at times to keep DIH out of the newspapers as it has been to obtain first rate publicity working in the manner in which we have been working. At times the effort of the Public Information Specialist has been similar to the days when PHS was attempting to close a venerated but outmoded TB sanatorium at Shawnee, Oklahoma, in the heart of the Five Tribes country.

PHS reorganization within the Department of Health, Education and Welfare has contributed considerably to newspaper interest, particularly when Indians criticize the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health agencies. There is much misunderstanding current.

It is not possible to report by clippings the adverse criticism in newspaper space nor the radio time which has been avoided. Nor is this type of work best reported in writing unless the Supervisor specifically requests that written reports be made of same. Such oblique reporting as has been done has not been fully grasped in its seriousness.

The ability to avoid unwholesome and unfair criticism of an Agency is based much on the confidence the newspaper profession has in the particular Public Information Specialist hired by that Agency. Unless she has the full support of her Director, this confidence can be dissipated. The good relations which have been established and maintained over a period of years can be destroyed. There comes a point at which she is no longer, in the estimation of the newspaper profession, a worthy reporter. Currently, Division of Indian Health and Public Health Service are resting to quite an extent on the work which was done as long ago as six years. The best work in ten years was done in the administration of Dr. Herbert A. Hudgins. His ability to work with a Public Information Specialist was not learned in his first year, however he demonstrated his appreciation for this work before leaving the Area to be transferred to Atlanta Regional Office. His successor turned everything over to the Executive Officer, and almost ever since, even with the coming of a new Indian Health Area Director, the Public Information Specialist function in the Oklahoma City Area has been discredited.

Since the matter of travel voucher disallowance is but one of a series of indicators of the lack of appreciation for professional public information consultant services, we submit this detailed report of the Tulsa trip and related public relations and public information activities on the specific incident of the Travel Voucher that was disallowed.

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