Statement by John A. Carver, Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Interior before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

It is my pleasure today, as the Assistant Secretary having general responsibility for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and as the representative of Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall, to present to the Committee the President's nominee for the important position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

In the administrative and technical phases of this Bureau, the largest in the Department and one of the oldest in government, Mr. Philleo Nash has had a unique opportunity to become superbly prepared for this responsibility.

Beginning last January, first as a consultant to the Secretary and later as Special Assistant to me detailed to the Indian Task Force Group set up by the Secretary, he has handled special projects which have enabled him to acquaint himself with every phase of the Bureau's organization, program, and problems. He has met with tribal delegations, he helped organize the task force's operating format, he reviewed reports from agency superintendents and area directors.

After Mr. W. W Keeler accepted the assignment as chairman of the task force, Mr. Nash served as a member, spending full time in this work. Its activities are well known to this committee, which has the report before it. They traveled 15,000 miles, interviewed 200 tribal groups and a hundred other witnesses, and had face to face contact with almost two thousand other Indians at seven field hearings. They visited seven reservations, and one non-reservation Indian community, from Florida to Montana and Nevada.
After the Task Force Report was completed, Mr. Nash had the opportunity further to familiarize himself with Indian problems, to get acquainted with their leaders, to work with Bureau employees, and to gain a sense of their problems. Throughout however he has remained free from direct Bureau operations, and will assume his new duties, if confirmed, unencumbered by any Bureau or Department involvement stemming from line responsibility.

Mr. Nash's broad background of public service, business, and governmental experience is before the Committee. Secretary Udall and I have found him to be a thoroughly competent administrator, exceptionally informed in this difficult area of responsibility. He is a team player, but imaginative and tough-minded. He will do a wonderful job and he has the Department's unstinting and unqualified support.