

CHARLES GATES: Everybody has been giving me the eye, so I'll get in on this here.

MR. BOST: Why don't we take a break here. We have been sitting here around this table for about an hour now.

MR. BOST: Let's get started again.

CHARLES GATES: I am going to get started then. I really don't have a lot here to say. But I just want to say thank you to the elected tribal council members for being here. This is something that we find sometimes you are very busy with land issues and treaty issues and gaming issues, and we are kind of forgotten, and everybody thinks it's going to go on forever and forever. But we do have some major concerns and issues, and I'd like to thank Kenny and Lyle, and I do appreciate, you are the tribal leaders and we are program directors.

Welcome Under Secretary Bost. I'm glad you could come out and hear some of the things that we have to say. We had some pretty lengthy discussions on the funding formula at our national conference, and maybe some of that was given to you.

The first thing I'd like to do is read a resolution here. And most of our tribes in this area any way do business with resolutions. This was adopted by our national association. This is a resolution to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. It's Resolution Number 388-05. (At which time the resolution was read in open to all members.)

This will be forwarded to your office with a letter from our tribal chairman.

I believe Councilman Jack from Pine Ridge and several of the other people here have already mentioned the fact that treaties exist and are still the supreme law of the land when it comes to our tribes. Chairman Charles Fraiser visited with me a few years ago about the fact that the income guideline should not be a part of this program, because it has ties to the rations program. You can talk and say well, it all changes with the food stamps back in 1977. But at that time some of the research I've done, tribes were not formally consulted when the program was then changed to the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. It was first they tried to eliminate it totally.

Several tribes in this area banded together and threatened Court action. Legal counsel in Washington at that time advised them to drop that, which they did. But income guidelines have long been a -- when I became director in 1988, one of the most difficult things I had to do, there were a lot of our older people that would not complete an application, simply because they said, we don't want to do that; that's a treaty right that they promise to give us food if we needed it. Some of them died, without receiving benefits from us, because that's how strongly they believed in it. So I was real, real glad to hear that they had introduced some legislation. Hopefully, we can get the rest of our tribes to get together with them on that. That's all I have on the funding formula.

USDA TRIBAL LEADER NUTRITION ROUNDTABLE
Hosted by USDA FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE, MOUNTAIN PLAINS REGION
TUESDAY, JULY 26, 2005; Journey Museum - Gallery, Rapid City, South Dakota

I think we talked long and hard on that at the National Association. And one of the things that I don't like about it is it divides us as tribes. It divides us as an association. That's an old trick, to divide and conquer. We all know that. I'm not saying that we can't come up with something that works. And I agree that however the appropriations are made to the region, is outdated. Nobody can tell me or show me the data and the research or whatever they have now, nobody can really explain that to me. I have asked that many times.

Income guidelines, I believe Under Secretary Bost, when you were at Pine Ridge at the forum down there and I asked you, is there a possibility for the Food Distribution Program participants, those that qualify live on two hundred, \$250 a month, a family of two. So they're well under the guidelines. And you get another family of two, and they qualify by a dollar. They each receive the same food package. Obviously, it tells me that there's a need for more food in this lower income family. And I believe your response at that time was, it's too late, that Farm Bill was reauthorized. Well, that I would like to have something looked into on that, if it's possible. The other time I presented it, it would create a nightmare of bookkeeping, but yet the food stamps have the Thrifty Food Package, that does just that.

We have some people that, you can call it a supplemental food package, but it's not. It's their primary source of food, believe me. They regard it as such. So if that is something that could be looked at, I would really appreciate that.

Back to the funding formula again, the task force, the working group, I really think that needs to be revisited. I think the selection process needs to include some of the other tribes that do not have a voice on this. Supposedly, someone is representing them on there, but there are some tribes that I think deserve a chair or a seat on that board, and I think one of them is the Navajo Nation. And there may be some other large tribes. I would really like to see that. MR. Cohen, I know you are not going to be there much longer. If it is possible to take another look at that work group, if that is possible.

Turn back of dollars has long been a problem for me, because I received the shock of my life when we took a big hit back in '94 and '95 when I visited with one of our senators, Senator Dorgan from North Dakota. And I was telling him that we need more funding, and he sent one of his aides to check on this, and he came back and said that they turned back seven hundred and some thousand dollars last year. And I nearly fell off my chair. I didn't know this was happening.

That was not the tribe's fault. Somebody in your regional offices were not doing their job. And you weren't here at this time, but it has been -- I think it's getting better and we are working on it. It shows that if we work at it, we can make improvements.

The other thing I strongly, I guess I have a hard time dealing with, it looks like we are in a contest with Foods Stamps versus Food Distribution and fighting for participation. And that's the basis for the funding formula and methodology that they are throwing at us is really wrong.

USDA TRIBAL LEADER NUTRITION ROUNDTABLE
Hosted by USDA FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE, MOUNTAIN PLAINS REGION
TUESDAY, JULY 26, 2005; Journey Museum - Gallery, Rapid City, South Dakota

You heard the resolution and you heard the other comments here, service areas, if you are going to do that, if you are going to have it passed on to the participants, you need to look at the whole playing field. I think you got a little upset about that wavier. Maybe I'm wrong on that.

MR. BOST: No, I didn't. I think my point about the wavier was, that I can't make a decision on something that I haven't seen. And the inference was, well, we sent it to you and you haven't done anything about it. The issue for me was, I can't make the decision on something that I have not seen.

CHARLES GATES: Let me address this. There is a difference in service areas, and believe me, housing plays a major, major part in this. Every reservation in this area and maybe throughout the nation, has housing shortages. And where do they go? They go to the biggest city next to them, Rapid City, Pierre, Bismarck, Mandan. They are close to the reservation. That's the only place they can find housing, and some of them don't find it; they sleep on the streets.

Some of those people would like to receive commodities. We keep a file on it, that would like to in Bismarck and Mandan, be able to have us tailgate. Mandan is 32 miles from our reservation border. I'm gathering data, and housing shortages, and how many of the people are on the housing list, and how many Native Americans are living in Bismarck and Mandan. Their population is now close to 60,000. There's a lot of Native Americans that live there. I think that's a real issue that I'd like to see looked at.

Can we expand our service area? I realize I was told, they have supermarkets that they can go to for food stamps. They don't want food stamps. They want commodity foods.

To look at some of the good things, I have been a part of the Food Package Review since its inception of it. And I believe, as a matter of fact, that along with a couple of other different people, we brought that to MR. Cohen, and it was one of the resolutions that came out of Mountain Plains Region and was approved. But, in the past two years, I believe that the Food Package Review had bogged down, due to AMS buying process, procurement process. It makes me somewhat upset and frustrated that all we are asking for is some better food, some healthier foods and we can't get it. The answer that comes to me is, well, they can get on food stamps. That's not what the participants want. I guess, with that, I am going to shut down here for a little while. I have a couple of other issues I want to talk about. Each and every one of us that is sitting around this table, I hope you realize, we are not here for ourselves, we are here for the participants. This is called a listening session; is that correct?

MR. BOST: Yes.

CHARLES GATES: A good listener, I'm told by my great grandparents, a good listener is, you just listen, you take it in and try to do something with it. And I hope that does happen here. Again, like I said, I welcome you here, and I'm very, very honored that you could come and take time to come and visit with us. We missed you at the national conference.

MR. BOST: I have heard that several times.

USDA TRIBAL LEADER NUTRITION ROUNDTABLE
Hosted by USDA FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE, MOUNTAIN PLAINS REGION
TUESDAY, JULY 26, 2005; Journey Museum - Gallery, Rapid City, South Dakota

CHARLES GATES: You know, it is unique that not very many of the Washington officials come out here.

MR. BOST: I've been to a couple of the reservations.

CHARLES GATES: Yeah, and I realize that. Still waiting for you to come to Standing Rock. That barbecue beef is getting kind of cold.

MR. BOST: I tell you what, I will come and visit you by October 15th, between now and October 15th. How's that?

CHARLES GATES: I'd love that. Standing Rock.

MR. BOST: Between now and October 15th, Standing Rock. I'll be there.

CHARLES GATES: Maybe you could slip down to Cheyenne River.

MR. BOST: Now you are getting greedy.

CHARLES GATES: I think that's one of those old sayings that the proof is in the pudding. You go out there and see what it is that we do on a day-to-day basis. And I know you know that, but you need to talk to the people that utilize this program. They are the ones that can tell you what they want. We are just messengers, all of us. I have one question for you on income guidelines. Why does WIC have a certain guideline, and the school lunches has a certain guideline, and the food distribution? That's very confusing to us that work on the reservation, because the people come to us and they ask us, why, and I don't even know how they come up with these guidelines.

MR. BOST: Congress. Since I've been Under Secretary, we have reauthorized the Food Stamp Program, the first year I was Under Secretary, and into 2003. And since then we have also reauthorized the Child Nutrition Programs, which would include the WIC program. And those are some recommendations that we have made to Congress about making some consistency across all our nutritional programs. And Congress has not agreed. That's what you need to go back and tell your folks. And those are the folks that vote and make the decisions. But we made some recommendations, and you have heard that before, but that's the answer to your question.

CHARLES GATES: I kind of expected that. I guess in closing here, my favorite topic for the last thirteen or fourteen years, is keeping buffalo or bison in the program as a permanent item. That hasn't happened. Each year we've introduced a resolution, and it's disapproved. Fortunately, we've been able to get Congress to appropriate special money for that. And attached to that a couple years ago with some infrastructure money, because there was no dollars available, but one of the answers was, that they didn't want to get more frozen meat products into the program because they didn't have freezers or coolers. So we were able to convince the senators to have some infrastructure money. And I think everybody got a piece of that pie. That's where those dollars came from. When someone else tells me, you need to go to Congress, that's what I do. If we can't

USDA TRIBAL LEADER NUTRITION ROUNDTABLE

Hosted by USDA FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE, MOUNTAIN PLAINS REGION
TUESDAY, JULY 26, 2005; Journey Museum - Gallery, Rapid City, South Dakota

implement change, and I wish we could, then we have to deal with our leaders. And I told them that, you guys have to start stepping up to the plate for us. You are the people that can implement change for members of Congress. I shared some gut feeling I've had for the past two to three years, and I hope I'm wrong. I hope it isn't some of the things that are happening, the funding formula and so forth, but I hope that they haven't been trying to do away with this program again. Because if they are, some of these young Congressmen and young senators need to be educated about the Treaty. With that, I thank you for your time.

DARLENE BARNES: Other comments?