

**Around Washington -**

# **Indian News Notes**

**By VINCE LOVETT**

**ABOUREZK WILL INTRODUCE TRIBAL-STATE COMPACT ACT:** Senator Abourezk planned to introduce a bill during the week of January 16-20 which could help to ease tensions and improve relations between Indian tribes and state governments. It would authorize the states and Indian tribes to enter into mutual agreements and compacts respecting jurisdiction and governmental operations in Indian country. The Act is designed to provide a flexible mechanism for resolving jurisdictional disputes to the benefit of both parties. It is based on the premise that an individual Indian tribe and one state government may be able to work out some of their problems by mutual agreement, if not hindered by restricting Federal Laws. Language in the bill notes that variance in local circumstances sometimes "precludes resolution of jurisdictional issues between the states and tribes on any one statutory formula." Another statement reads: "There is need for clarification of the jurisdiction of the respective tribes and the state and local governments; but this clarification need not be premised on the destruction of one government to clarify the authority of the other. By the same token, the tribes and the states cannot continue to meet their respective governmental responsibilities in total isolation from each other. In recent years there have been cooperative agreements between states and tribes regarding the operations of their governments, and there are increasing expressions of interest from state and tribal authorities to enter into compacts and agreements respecting their mutual authorities and responsibilities. It is the responsibility of the Congress to facilitate this process."

**ANDRUS DESCRIBED AS ENVIRONMENTALIST, INDIAN SUPPORTER:** The January 18 Washington Star carried a front-page feature on Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus. It said Andrus is considered by some people "a conservation-crazed environmentalist who wants to shut down the Western states and turn them back to the grizzly bears and rattlesnakes." It also said that many environmentalists "are critical of his support of Indian claims on water and hunting rights," such as his support recently of the Eskimos on the bowhead whale issue. The article also mentioned that Andrus has recruited several Indians for top jobs in the Department.

**SUPREME COURT WILL RULE ON SECRETARY'S POWER TO MAKE "INDIAN COUNTRY":** The United States Supreme Court has agreed to rule whether Federal or state courts have jurisdiction to try Choctaw Indians accused of a crime that took place on their reservation in Mississippi. The underlying question is whether the acquisition of land and a 1944 proclamation by the Secretary of the Interior that it is a reservation makes the area "Indian Country" over which Federal, not state, courts would have jurisdiction. The government says the decision could have a serious impact on a state like California where many Indian reservations were created by a similar process.