

Indian News Notes

By VINCE LOVETT

INDIAN EDUCATION STAYS IN BIA: The Senate passed on September 28 S. 991, the bill to establish a new Cabinet-level Department of Education — but they left the BIA education programs in Interior. The amendment, introduced by Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, to exclude the BIA programs from consolidation with the other programs passed by a vote of 47-39. In arguing for the amendment, Senator Stevens said: "I could repeat all the arguments that have been made; but, for myself, the argument that makes the most sense is the one they presented themselves when I chaired the hearings of our committee on the subject. They told me: Self-determination and the Educational Assistance Act have not been in place long enough for us to make the progress that should be made on our own in managing and controlling our own destiny. They asked me for additional time before their programs are combined with those of the Department of Education. It is not a position that says that they would never consent to merging the functions of Indian education with the Department of Education. They say that if self-determination means anything, the Indian control over Indian issues, on which we promised we would listen to them, then the whole spirit of self-determination, will be violated if Congress does not listen to them as they represent their people in telling us they do not support this move."

* * *

INTERIOR SECRETARY WANTS LEGISLATION TO SETTLE FISHING ISSUE: Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus told a Seattle Times reporter recently that the dispute between Indian and non-Indian fishermen in Washington State should be resolved in Congress. Andrus, saying he would seek a legislative settlement, noted: "The longer we wait (for a solution), the more the resource will be depleted. Nobody is representing the fish, and if we keep messing around, there won't be enough fish to worry about." He said he agreed with a group of Northwest fisheries experts who warned that fish runs are in jeopardy because fisheries management is not coordinated. About the Boldt decision, which allocated half the salmon and steelhead catch to treaty Indian fishermen, Andrus said, "The final negotiator will be the Congress of the United States."

* * *

WASHINGTON SENATOR CUTS FINDING FOR INDIAN FISHING RIGHTS-USE: Senator Warren Magnuson of Washington expressed his dissatisfaction with Interior Department spending for Indian rights protection by knocking \$3 million out of the budget for enforcement of the Boldt decision, a Magnuson aide told the Tacoma News Tribune. The aide said that this year's Interior budget came over from the House containing \$18 million for Indian rights protection nationwide, with about \$6 million of that proposed for spending in Washington State. "About \$4.5 million of that \$6 million is for Boldt enforcement," the aide said, "and some of that is going to the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission." The Senate originally cut \$5 million from the House version, but in conference committee agreed to restore \$2 million with the understanding that the cut which remained would come from the Boldt portion. The aide said, "Magnuson knocked \$3 million out of that \$4.5 million for Boldt enforcement because nobody has been able to tell him what the money is spent for." Magnuson is chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

* * *

BILLINGS PAPER PUBLISHED REPORT ON INDIAN TRAGEDY OF LAND FRAGMENTATION: The September 24 issue of the Billings Gazette reported on the problems of fragmentation of Indian land following the 1887 Allotment Act. It cited

Indian News Notes

(Continued from Page 4)

one example in which an Idaho Indian inherited an interest of 11/196,000,360ths of 6.7 acres. That's a couple of square inches — but the paperwork is the same as it would be for a larger plot. The following is excerpted: "In 1887. . . The General Allotment Act. . . gave each Indian who had been herded onto the reservation a parcel of land to call his own. . . In a few decades, a third of the 60 million acres of allotted land had passed into white hands through 'allotment sales'. . . Today much of the remaining 40 million acres has reverted to tribal ownership. . . The rest is so mired in red tape that it is becoming increasingly useless to those who own it and . . . a massive, costly record keeping burden on the Federal Government. . . Tribal leaders studying the problem in the past. . . have suggested either grants of low-interest loans to tribes to be used for the purchase of heirship interests. With the avalanche of paper work threatening to bury the BIA, this approach might be a cheap way out."

* * *

PRESIDENT SIGNS NARRAGANSETT LAND CLAIM SETTLEMENT BILL: President Carter signed legislation September 30 to bring about the first settlement of an Indian land claim under the 1790 Nonintercourse Act. The bill brings Federal ratification and funding to an agreement reached by the Narragansett Tribe, the State of Rhode Island and a group of individual landholders. Final approval of the agreement now rests with the Rhode Island Legislature, which is expected to address the matter soon after it convenes in January. The settlement, which involves only 1,800 acres of land, is considered important as a precedent. The Christian Science Monitor described the agreement as "a significant turning point in the struggle to find an equitable means for restoring Indian lands."

* * *

NORTHWEST INDIANS CONCERNED ABOUT UNAUTHORIZED SPOKESMEN: The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians recently passed a resolution expressing concern that statements by individual Indians supporting the proposed Department of Education have been given recognition by Senate and House Committees while opposition by tribal governing bodies has been ignored or disregarded. Their resolution concluded that "the National Tribal Chairman's Association and the National Congress of American Indians be mandated to inform the Federal agencies and the Congress that only the American Indian tribes and other Indian organizations that are eligible for educational benefits from BIA have the right to express and promulgate decisions and policies that are made by tribal governments and that all other individuals and organizations must cease and desist from the temptation to speak for the tribes unless specifically designated to do so by resolution or other tribal authority."