

Around Washington —

Indian News Notes

By VINCE LOVETT

NON-INDIANS OPPOSE NAVAJO PURCHASE OF LAND: Hearings on an environmental impact statement have brought opposition to a proposed purchase of 250,000 acres of land in Arizona's Houserock Valley-Paria Plateau area by the Navajo Tribe. The land would be used to relocate Navajo families required to move because of the partitioning of the 1.8 million acre Navajo-Hopi Joint Use Area. The tribe had made application for the Houserock Valley-Paria Plateau land. The Coconino County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to oppose the purchase. The Board chairman said it would be unfair to displace people now living there. It was also noted that a large portion of the county would become non-taxable with the purchase by the tribe. Ranchers from the area also opposed the purchase; some of them have lived on the land for four generations. Though much of the land is public domain, most of it is under permit to ranchers. The environmental impact statement considered some other sites not selected by the tribe.

NEW ASSIGNMENT FOR BILLINGS AREA DIRECTOR: According to the *Billings Gazette* Jim Canan may soon be leaving his post as BIA director for the states of Montana and Wyoming. In a September 16 article the paper said Canan had been talking with Interior Assistant Secretary Forrest Gerard about a new job, working to implement a BIA reorganization plan (announced by Gerard at the NCAI meeting in Rapid City September 21) to increase the BIA's management efficiency in the field. Canan told the paper that no final decision had been made on a new assignment, but he was looking forward to the change. He has been the Billings area director for 15 years.

REPORTS FROM NCAI MEET BLAST CARTER POLICY, BIA REORGANIZATION: Reporting on the National Congress of American Indians convention September 18-22 the *Rapid City Journal* highlighted President Veronica Murdock's opening comments on the Carter Indian policy. It reported her as saying that "the Administration's policy for dealing with Indians in rudderless and unresponsive to either anti-Indian legislation before Congress or Indian demands for input into policies affecting tribes." A story in the *Aberdeen American News* was headlined: "BIA would add more bureaucrats." The story, reporting on Interior Assistant Secretary Forrest Gerard's talk at the convention, said: "An Interior Department official proposed making the Bureau of Indian Affairs more effective Thursday by adding another level of bureaucracy."

HOUSE PASSES INDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE BILL: A bill (H.R. 9158) to support Indian community colleges with grants for operational expenses of \$4,000 per full-time student was passed by voice in the House September 26. A similar bill (S.1215) was passed by the Senate November 4, 1977. It is now expected that the Senate will accept the House version and the bill will go quickly to the President for signing. The bill defines a tribally controlled community college as an institution of higher education which is formally controlled, sanctioned or chartered by an Indian tribe's governing body. The bill also authorizes \$3.2 million for technical assistance to tribally controlled community colleges and requires the Interior Secretary to conduct a detailed survey of the construction needs of such colleges, to be forwarded to Congress by November 1, 1979. Title II of the bill amends the Navajo Community College Act. In addition to making NCC eligible for other benefits of the bill, it authorizes needed construction funds for the school.

FORMER INDIAN COMMISSIONER CITED AS ILLEGAL VOTER BY LOSER: Morris Thompson, one-time BIA Indian Commissioner, was charged with casting an illegal vote in Alaska's recent primaries. Thompson reacted angrily to being cited by name in what was described by the *Tundra Times* as a "rambling list of allegations" of election improprieties by an attorney for gubernatorial losing candidate Wally Hickel. Thompson, now the vice-president of Northwest Alaskan Pipeline, said he voted by absentee ballot from his lifelong residence in Tanana, Alaska. The charge questioned his Tanana residency. An editorial in the *Tundra Times* noted that Thompson has lived in many places, but "no matter where he was, Tanana was home." Thompson, a protege, friend and associate of the former Interior Secretary Hickel, was the only individual cited by name in the lawyer's charges.

CITY OF TACOMA LOSES SUIT AGAINST PUYALLUPS: Efforts by the City of Tacoma, Washington and adjoining municipalities to prevent the Secretary of the Interior from taking land within their boundaries in trust for the Puyallup Indians have failed. Judge Gerhard Gessell of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia has ruled that the actions of the Secretary in placing various tracts in trust was lawful as authorized by 25 U.S.C. Considerable local hostility had been generated, since whenever the tribe or any of its members became the beneficial owner in trust, it renounced or disputed the civil tax and criminal jurisdiction of the city. Most of Tacoma lies within the historic boundaries of the Puyallup Reservation.

SENATOR STEVENS: "I just want to make certain the Senate understands that this amendment is not acceptable to the American Indian tribes. It does not have the support of the organizations which do articulate the need of American Indian people and I do not think it meets their objections as they presented them to the committee and presented them to those of us who attempt to speak for the Indian people here in the Senate. . . The Indian people of our country made a great case when they came before the Governmental Affairs Committee and pleaded with us to delete these provisions that would transfer the BIA schools and education programs from the Department of the Interior to the new Department of Education. . . There are some from the Indian community who disagree. But the overwhelming majority of the American Indian people oppose the transfer of the BIA schools and education programs as contemplated by this bill. . . If self-determination means anything, it means the Indian people ought to be listened to in terms of how Congress reacts to their demands. . ."