

Sen. Mike Gravel Pushes Idea—

Review of Management of Indian Funds by Interior Department Asked

WASHINGTON—In a letter to the Comptroller General signed by Senator George McGovern, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, and Senator Mike Gravel Subcommittee Member, the General Accounting Office was requested to conduct a comprehensive review and audit of the practices and procedures of the Department of the Interior in the managing of Indian settlement funds awarded in court judgments.

Senator Gravel had called for such a review in the course of hearings on two bills (S.2628 and S.2650) concerning the disposition of funds awarded the Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska two years ago.

Senator Gravel's bill would set

new precedent by allowing the tribe to expend and invest its \$7.5 million judgment free of supervision by the Department of the Interior. Interior presently "oversees" some \$320 million in tribal monies.

A major question posed in the letter was, "Given the present fact of government involvement in Indian settlements after the awards are made, how capable is Interior in performing the role of investment counselor and financial manager?"

It is expected that issues to be examined will include the appropriateness of the location and staffing of the BIA financial management activity at Albuquerque, New Mexico; the adequacy of procedures employed by BIA in

placing the funds with the banking community; the relation of BIA to the Indian tribes and their legal counsel with respect to the role played by each in investment decisions; and the timeliness with which the agency acts in carrying out these mutual tasks.

"I disagree fundamentally with the absurd idea that no In-

dian settlement should be managed by the recipients without Interior holding the veto power," Senator Gravel said, "but if Interior is going to have the responsibility, it should handle the monies as professionally and with as great returns as would a private investment manager. We must see to this."