

# DoL can't close offices

A temporary restraining order was issued by the federal district court in Washington, D.C. on September 15th preventing the Department of Labor (DOL) from closing its three Indian outstation field offices. Another hearing will be held shortly to determine whether field offices will remain open indefinitely.

The three offices in San Francisco, Seattle and Denver provide technical assistance to 77 tribes who operate programs under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and the new Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The suit was filed by the Native American Rights Fund on behalf of the Northern Cheyenne, Colville, Osage, Hopi, Lummi, Colorado River and Papago Tribes.

The three outstation offices provide considerable expertise

to the tribes in Indian employment issues and handling complex JPTA regulations. The Department of Labor attempted to close the offices by Sept. 23 without consulting with the affected tribes as required by law. DOL proposed to replace the experts with Washington, D.C.-based personnel having little or no expertise with Indian employment problems.

Henry Sockbeson, NARF attorney for the tribes in the matter, quoted figures from the Indian and Service Population and Labor Force Estimates, which indicate unemployment for America's Indians averages 51 percent and runs as high as 93 percent on some reservations. This figure compares with a national non-Indian average of 9.3 percent according to NEWS, U.S. DOL, Bureau of Labor and Statistics.