

Indian News Notes

By VINCE LOVETT

INTERIOR TESTIMONY ON BIA MANAGEMENT: At the Senate hearing, August 1, on the American Indian policy Review Commission's recommendations for improving the BIA's management Interior Under Secretary James Joseph said: "Although this Administration has not yet formulated a specific new organizational structure for the Bureau, we completely agree that in order to effectively carry out its trustee functions and to fully implement Public Law 93-638 the Bureau must organize itself for a new primary role as a technical assistance agency. We also agree that (1) administrative overhead can and should be reduced so that more funds are available for programs in Indian communities; (2) maximum decision-making authority should exist at the local agency or service center level; and (3) intermediate levels of activity which constrict the flow of services and slow down decision-making should be streamlined and eliminated where not justified." In listing eight actions the Department planned to take Joseph said: "We will be working with Assistant Secretaries and others in the Office of the Secretary to give renewed attention to Indian Affairs as a major department priority. This is a commitment we have affirmed to all of the Bureaus in the Department as well as to Indian tribes and the American public."

GERARD CONFIRMATION HEARINGS SET: September 9, 12 and 13 have been scheduled by the Senate Indian Affairs Committee for the confirmation hearings for Forrest Gerard as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior. August hearings were not feasible because Congress will be recessed from August 6 to September 6. In the meantime Gerard is working on a consulting basis as an adviser to Secretary Andrus.

MAINE INDIANS ASSAIL SETTLEMENT PROPOSAL: MAINE Indian leaders said they were shocked by the recommendations of Presidential adviser William Gunter that Congress eliminate their claims of ownership of private land in Maine. "We spent five years getting the courts to force the Federal Government to act as our trustee," said Francis Nicholas, head of the Pleasant Point Passamaquoddy Reservation. "Now this man says that if we don't accept his terms, the President should protect the big timber companies by taking away our claim. I just don't understand it." The tribal leaders said that they would consider the Gunter proposal only as a point of departure for further talks, adding that they were upset that the proposed settlement made no provision for negotiations.

STATE OFFICIALS DISCUSS INDIAN HUNTING/FISHING RIGHTS: At the 57th annual meeting of the Western Association of State Game and Fish Commissioners, the erosion of state wildlife agencies management rights was a major concern. Representatives of ten states, bothered by Indian tribal rights, approved the following statements: (1) Non-Indians who hunt and or fish on Indian reservations should be required to abide by state regulations and license requirements; (2) Existing reservations should not be expanded at the expense of reducing available public lands; (3) State fish and wildlife agencies must be the sole management authority of resident wildlife resources, regardless of who owns or controls the habitat; (4) All citizens of the United States should have equal rights in the taking of wildlife.

PAPAGO MINE PROPOSAL PITS ENVIRONMENT vs. ECONOMY
A proposed cooper mine on the Papago Reservation would provide jobs for about 70 tribal members and produce an income of more than \$3 million annually for the tribe, but a small group of Papagos, museum officials and representatives of the state game and fish department are opposed to the mine. The Indians live in a village three miles from the site and would bear the brunt of the traffic, noise, dust and other disturbances. The museum people are concerned about archeological sites and the sportsmen about bighorn sheep. A BIA official acknowledged that the mine had negative effects, but said "it's pretty hard to talk against millions of dollars income to the tribe."

LOUISIANA INDIANS SUE UNDER NON-INTERCOURSE ACT: The Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana filed a civil suit July 15 against 84 defendants to recover land and trespass damages. The tribe said that the land, between 2,500 and 4,000 acres, was taken from them in violation of the 1790 Non-intercourse Act. They have also petitioned the Interior Department to support a similar suit for a smaller tract of land. The tribe's attorneys apparently wanted to make sure that the statute of limitations deadline of July 18 (since extended) would not adversely affect them.