

Second National Indian/Alaska Native Health Conference

At a time when congressional fuel is being added to the flames of anti-Indian backlash in this country, American Indians and Alaska Natives may likewise find their unique system of health care planning and delivery threatened by legislation, both pending and existing.

Eighteen separate National Health Insurance (NHI) bills were introduced in the last session of Congress and with the recent submission of a draft proposed national plan to President Carter by his HEW Secre-

tary, the adoption of some form of NHI has taken on increased likelihood.

The president has consistently called for "universal" and "mandatory" insurance coverage. It has been assumed by some, therefore, that the Administration's NHI proposal will cover the entire population. This is not to forecast the replacement of the Indian Health Service by NHI, only to say that Indian people must continue their vigorous efforts to have their views considered before an

Administration plan is finally introduced.

Likewise, the potential for the agencies established under P. L. 93-641: the National Health Planning and Resource Development Act to interfere with, or at best influence, tribal and urban Indian health planning is becoming increasingly apparent.

Numerous Health Systems Agencies (HSAs) across the nation are attempting to expand their authority over tribes' applications for HEW grants and funds from that of review and comment to review and approval.

With the law up for renewal this year, Indian and Alaska Native people can play a strong role in safeguarding their sovereign planning authority by taking an active part in the amendment of this legislation.

These are two of the major health issues to be focused on by the National Indian Health Board at its upcoming Second National Indian/Alaska Native Health Conference, a three day gathering to deal specifically with the health needs and concerns of Indians and Alaska Natives.

Scheduled for February 13-15 (with registration beginning

the afternoon of the 12th), the conference will take place at the Albuquerque Inn and Convention Center, Albuquerque, N.M.

Keynote speakers for the conference will be Dr. Emery Johnson, director of the Indian Health Service, and George I. Lythcott, M.D., administrator of the Health Services Administration. Senator Pete V. Domenici of New Mexico will deliver the banquet's main address.

Participants will hear a broad range of thought presented on key national health issues, given by the most knowledgeable individuals in the health field. A primary speaker will be followed by several panel members, on the subjects of National Health Insurance; P.L. 93-641; and Mechanisms for Effective Implementation of P.L. 93-638 (the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act)

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and P.L. 94-437 (the Indian Health Care Improvement Act), with every effort being made to present divergent viewpoints to better enable Indian and Alaska Native participants to make truly informed decisions in respect to involvement with/or the application of these laws in their own communities.