

Abourezk wants Gerald out

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Sen. James Abourezk (D-S.D.), chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, has called for the resignation of BIA Director Forrest Gerard. Abourezk's request culminated a series of exchanges in which Abourezk has been increasingly critical of Gerard for what he views as Gerard's "deliberate delay of vital BIA reorganization in direct contradiction of promises made to the Senate during his confirmation hearings."

Abourezk said Gerard's actions to date remind him of a funeral service for Indian self-determination and said, in a letter to Secretary Cecil Andrus, "I would suggest, Mr. Secretary, that we emulate the Egyptian Pharaohs and put all those promises Mr. Gerard gave under oath at his confirmation

hearings into the same tomb with Indian self-determination."

Abourezk was also sharply critical of Gerard for his mishandling of a situation in the Albuquerque BIA office which resulted in the takeover of that office by aggrieved governors and representatives of the all Indian Pueblo Council recently. Abourezk said Gerard appointed Sidney Mills, a Sioux Indian, to the Albuquerque BIA Area Directorship despite the support of 21 of the 23 affected Pueblo tribes for a Pueblo candidate, Roland Johnson. Abourezk questioned how this action squared with promises made by Andrus himself, and by Gerard, to "do what the Indians want," and to "support Indian self-determination." Abourezk called Gerard's claim that the Pueblo

favorite Johnson would have a conflict of interest in administering the office because he is a Pueblo "ridiculous." "To follow this reasoning to a logical conclusion, would Mr. Gerard's appointment as assistant secretary for Indian Affairs be a conflict because, in the past, he has alleged that he is an Indian?" Abourezk asked Andrus.

Abourezk said Andrus has rejected his request that Gerard be asked to resign. "I respect Secretary Andrus, but I have felt compelled to write him again on this matter in hopes he will recognize the conflict between the actions of his appointee Mr. Gerard and his own personally stated commitment that government should try to find out what the Indian people want and then act accordingly."