

Around Washington -

Indian News Notes

By VINCE LOVETT

NEWSWEEK REPORTS ON THE RICH INDIANS: The March 20 issue of the national news magazine includes the following, "...According to the U.S. geologists...Indian reservations of the West contain between 25 and 40 percent of all U.S. uranium, nearly one-third of all Western coal and about 5 percent of U.S. reserves of oil and natural gas...Indians...are learning to organize, to apply political pressure and to recapture control of their land. For guidance, they have been looking to the OPEC countries...Already, the Indians have succeeded in attracting strong Federal interest in their cause; Energy Deputy Secretary John O'Leary predicts that CERT will win most of the requests--particularly those concerning technical assistance and advice on how to invest energy revenues. Without astute management, the danger is that in a rush to reap as much as possible from their riches, some tribes might deplete precious resources too quickly, trim the land and be left with little to show of the effort..." The same issue of Newsweek also carried a report on a lawsuit challenging a traditional Indian privilege in Santa Fe, New Mexico of exclusive use of the porchlike portal of the Palace of the Governors for a thriving tourist business.

CARTER SIGNS SIOUX LAND CLAIMS BILL: President Carter signed legislation March 14 that permits the United States Court of Claims to decide whether the United States unconstitutionally acquired more than seven million acres in South Dakota's Black Hills from the Sioux Indians. If the court rules in favor of the Sioux, the government will have to pay the Indians about \$105 million, which includes interest for the land.

FLORIDA COURT UPHOLDS TAX-FREE CIGARETTE SALES: Leon County Circuit Court Judge Charles Miner denied an attempt to have state taxes levied on cigarettes sold by Indians on the Seminole Reservation. The judge said: "The relevant law does not permit the tax on Indian land unless it is authorized by a Congressional Act or treaty." Bill Osceola, manager of the tribe's business operations, said the tribe has no plans to initiate other ventures. He said "the people are not quite ready to open a liquor store or a gambling casino." Osceola also said that a gas station was not likely either.

NORTH DAKOTA INDIANS DISPLEASED BY OLIPHANT DECISION: The Supreme Court decision that Indian tribes had no criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians on reservations was called unfair by tribal officials in North Dakota. Richard Fredericks, tribal judge on the Turtle Mountain Reservation and vice president of the National Indian Court Judges Association, said: "I'm displeased with it. For one thing, we're not getting fair treatment. If we Indians commit a crime on state land, we're tried in state court. But if non-Indians commit a crime on Indian land, we can't try them." Pat McLaughlin, chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, said: "Indian law when it was set up was territorial law, not for persons. Anyone who came into that territory should be subject to that law. It wasn't made just for certain persons. I don't think it's fair...If any non-Indian comes on the reservation, he's not subject to nothing."

NORTHWEST TRIBES SUPPORT FOUNDING OF INDIAN NEWS ASSOCIATION: One of the resolutions adopted at the Winter Conference of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians acknowledged the value of the Indians news media as "a major source of distributing and expressing the viewpoints of tribal councils and Indian organizations" and therefore supported "the establishment of the Northwest Indian News Association." Unfortunately, the support voted was only moral, encouraging "the continued search for funding to perpetuate and support Indian journalism which is beneficial to all tribes and every Indian organization." You can't pay bills with moral support, but it is better than no support.