

# **Indian News Notes**

By VINCE LOVETT

**Indian Actor Jay Silverheels, Tonto in 'Lone Ranger' Show, is Dead:** Jay Silverheels, 62, who co-starred in the long-running "Lone Ranger" television series as the faithful Indian sidekick Tonto, died March 5 of complications from pneumonia. He was 62 years old. A Mohawk Indian, born on the Six Nations Indian Reservation in Canada, he got his first good movie role in 1947, appearing with Tyrone Power in "Captain from Castile." In the 1950s he starred as the Indian chief Geronimo in "Broken Arrow," "Battle at Apache Pass" and "Walk the Proud Land." In the 1960s Silverheels founded the Indian Actors Workshop in Hollywood to help get Indian actors roles. "He created the atmosphere for us to get into the industry," an actress, Lois Red Elk, said. "Before that, Indian people had to play props, extras, background. There just weren't any Indian people with speaking parts." Silverheels was a Golden Gloves boxer, amateur wrestling champion and a professional lacrosse player in his youth.

**Indians Exempted From Windfall Profits Tax on Oil; Must Pay Severance:** Indian tribes and individuals escaped the windfall profits tax on oil when a Senate-House conference agreed February 21 not to tax profits from trust lands. The Alaska Native regional and village corporations also received exemption though their lands are not held in trust. The Indians, along with local governments below the state level, are subject, however, to a 15 percent severance tax according to the conference report. The House bill would have fully taxed the Indians and early reports indicated that the conference committee would reduce the tax for Indian trust lands, but not eliminate it. The lobbying efforts of Indian organizations apparently was effective. It is not expected that Indians will be affected by any possible changes when the conference committee's version is brought up for floor votes.

**Senate Votes to Extend Time for Indians to File Claims:** A bill (S. 2222) to give Indian tribes and individuals more time to take action on certain land claims was passed by the Senate February 20. Unless the House also agrees to an extension the Federal Government will be banned on April 1, 1980, by a statute of limitations from filing any claims against third parties on behalf of tribes or individuals for pre-1966 trespass and other wrongs related to Indian lands. The Department of the Interior is now involved in trying to process more than 9,000 claims ranging from disputes over unlawful extraction of minerals and oil from Indian lands to alleged illegal encroachment on Indian territories. Both Interior and the Justice Department testified that they would be unable to complete their work on all these claims before the April 1 deadline. Senator John Melcher testified that the deadline would cause the mass filing of cases, many of which would not be taken to court if additional time were allowed to study the merits of the cases or to negotiate a settlement. Senator Cohen of Maine opposed the extension. He said that prior to 1966 there was no statute of limitations so Congress, when a six-year limitation was initiated, gave the Indians and the Government six years to 1972 to catch up. This was subsequently extended to 1977 and, after much debate, an absolutely last extension was granted to 1980. He argued that 14 years was enough and that there should not be another absolutely last extension. The Senate, however, voted to extend the filing time to 1984, but only for cases identified by the Secretary of the Interior before December 31, 1981. The bill is expected to encounter strong opposition in the House, where hearings may begin before the end of February.

**BIA Information Officer Inducted Into School's Athletic Hall of Fame:** Tom Oxendine, Acting Director of the BIA's Public Information office was honored by his alma mater, Pembroke State University of North Carolina, by being one of the first five alumni inducted into the school's athletic hall of fame. A ten-letter winner, Oxendine captained the school's basketball and baseball teams and was awarded a medal as the school's best athlete on his graduation in 1948.