

Non-Native retirement bill passes Congress

By VINCE LOVETT

On November 26 the Senate passed an early retirement bill for non-Indian employees of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service. The bill, H.R. 1885, had been previously introduced and passed in the House.

In comments made before the Senate vote, Senator John Melcher, Chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee, indicated that a presidential veto was not likely.

He said; "I urge the Senate once again, for the third, and I hope last time to pass H.R.

1885. This time, because of the approval of the administration, including the Secretary of the Interior, Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management this long-delayed legislation will become law."

In both 1977 and 1978, similar bills had been rejected, in part because of opposition from agencies named by Melcher. Senator Ted Stevens identified in his comments the basic reason for the bill: "Indian preference in hiring and promotions, though desirable, has locked non-Indian employees into dead end jobs."