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3 Shifted in Indian Bureau; One a Critic of U.S. Policy

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 10 —

Three employes of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, including an outspoken critic of the Government's treatment of Indians, have been relieved of their posts.

One of them, William H. Veeder, a 60-year-old lawyer who has criticized the handling of Indian water rights, said he has been given an "ultimatum" to move to Arizona or be "fired."

The shake-up in the bureau's Economic Development Office came to light after Senator John V. Tunney, Democrat of California, expressed "shock and dismay" over the order given to Mr. Veeder, an authority on Indian water rights. Senator Tunney said in a statement that the action "seems clearly designed to ship him away from the Washington scene where he has been so effective."

A group of younger Indians, who have been pushing reforms within the bureau, were "angered" by the actions, according to one of them. They viewed the treatment of Mr. Veeder, in particular, as an attempt to reverse a trend toward giving Indians more of a voice in their own affairs.

Says He Will Refuse

Mr. Veeder said there was no doubt that he was being asked to move in an effort to silence him. He said he would refuse the transfer to the bureau's office in Phoenix.

The other employes are Leon F. Cook, who was acting director of the Economic Development Office, and Charles P. Corke, a specialist in natural resources.

Mr. Cook said that he understood that he was to be named director of the office but was replaced as acting director two weeks ago. Mr. Corke was asked to transfer to Denver and ment as the bureau's representative on a departmental study of Western water resources.

John O. Crow, Deputy Indian Commissioner, denied that he had given Mr. Veeder an ultimatum but had urged him to accept the Phoenix post.

"Our concern is that the bureau has to do something effective to protect Indian water rights, particularly in the Southwest," Mr. Crow said.

Says He Wanted Best Man

He asserted that he did not have in mind Mr. Veeder's past criticisms of the handling of Indian problems when he asked him to go to Phoenix. He said that he was seeking the best man he could find to protect Indian water rights in the construction of a giant project designed to pump Colorado River water to the Phoenix and Tucson areas.

"I asked him to take the job because of my confidence in his ability," he added.

He said that Mr. Veeder was "reluctant to take the assignment" but would talk it over with his family. "He hasn't been back," he added.

Sees Questions Raised

Mr. Crow, a Cherokee career employe, was named deputy commissioner two weeks ago, an appointment that young Indian activists in the bureau viewed as outflanking them in their reform movement.

Mr. Crow also asked Mr. Corke and Mr. Cook to take other positions.

Commissioner Louis R. Bruce was out of town, accompanying Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton on a tour of the Southwest, including Indian reservations.

Mr. Cook said that the shifts "raised a lot of questions" about whether the bureau was to carry out its mandate from President Nixon that Indians should have more self-determination.

He said that Mr. Veeder was the "only guy in the bureau

who was in a position to be effective" in protecting Indian rights from the encroachment of the white man through construction of dams and other water projects to serve farmers, ranchers and growing Western rural communities.

Mr. Veeder said that he thought "Indians were being phased out of existence in the western states," adding, "I'm willing to go to the mat on that."

He has testified before Congressional committees to his belief that water resources were a prerequisite for economic development of Indian reservations because the latter are located in arid and semiarid areas of the West.