

# Changes in U.S. Agency Stir Anger Among Indians

By WILLIAM M. BLAIR  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 15—The power of the Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs has been reduced by the Secretary of the Interior, Rogers C. B. Morton, as part of a realignment of the agency.

His order, made without public notice, has angered young activist Indians in the bureau and some Indian leaders. They view the action as undercutting the mandate they thought they had from President Nixon to help Indians gain a larger role in management of their own affairs.

Some of the young activists, who joined the bureau two years ago under the auspices of Commissioner Louis R. Bruce, a Mohawk-Sioux from New York, trace the shake-up to the White House and see it as an effort to silence their public criticism of the bureau's operations.

Secretary Morton said in a telephone interview that he had acted to "upgrade the entire secretariat" of the department.

"Good management seems to be a thing a lot of people are discouraging these days," he said. The younger Indians who have been brought in under Commissioner Bruce, he said, are "excellent people," but "the thing we've got to do is to get them all pulling together as a team."

Leon F. Cook, a Red Lake Chippewa, who was dismissed last week as acting director of economic development, called the reorganization a setback for Indians and believe that the bureau's function is that of "advocate and trustee" for the Indians, particularly in land and water rights.

"Trusteeship is what the bureau is all about," he said. "Morality goes by the boards as pressure develops from vested business interests who see the Indian water and land as booty."

Mr. Morton's order, No. 2946, vests in a new deputy commissioner all the authority held by the commissioner. It also makes clear who shall be in charge by giving the deputy the sole power to redelegate authority, even authority previously reserved for the commissioner. It does so in this language:

"Any redelegation of authorities in this order to the deputy commissioner and the commissioner may be made only by the deputy commissioner."

Secretary Morton described Mr. Crow's duties as "administrative." This, he said, would free Mr. Bruce for "creative" efforts among Indians. "The bureau is getting into a position to do more for Indian people and with greater dispatch," he said. "The value of experience and judgment is not recognized by some of the younger people."

The new deputy, John O. Crown, a career employe who is one-quarter Cherokee, moved swiftly to make organizational changes after assuming the office.

Mr. Bruce had abolished the office two years ago. Secretary Morton recreated it after complaints that Mr. Bruce had not controlled his young activists or developed good management practices.

It was Mr. Crow who replaced Mr. Cook as acting director of economic development. Mr. Crow also directed the transfer of two men who Mr. Cook considered to be main-

stays in protecting Indian land and water rights.

By directing the transfer to Arizona of William H. Veeder, a 60-year-old career employe who is an authority on Indian water rights, Mr. Crow touched off protests from Indians and Capitol Hill. Several members of Congress have demanded that the transfer be held up until Congress can review the situation.

Secretary Morton talked by telephone from Albuquerque during a trip to inspect department projects. Mr. Bruce is traveling with the Secretary, and it was not possible to reach him.

Mr. Morton said he was troubled by "not militant, exactly, but recalcitrant groups that develop when things don't

go their way."

He continued, "They don't go to the boss—they never come running to me [although] my doors are always open. They run to some Senators or where they can get a lot of press. You've got to make a firm decision, not a hard position. We're going to make this thing work."

Speaking of the directed transfer of Mr. Veeder, who was sent to Phoenix to help Indians in connection with a major water project in Arizona, Mr. Morton said:

"We've got to win some Indian water rights cases. If Veeder is as good as he claims he is, he's going to have a chance to really prove it. We're going to go to bat in a good many of these water rights cases."