

FROM THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS

NEW INDIAN AFFAIRS AIDE TO SENATE INTERIOR COMMITTEE

Senator Henry M. Jackson, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, today announced the appointment of Forrest J. Gerard to the professional staff of the Committee as a consultant on Indian affairs.

Gerard, an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe of Montana, has served since November 1967 as Director of the Office of Indian Affairs for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Senator Jackson stated: "The staff responsibility for both the Indian Affairs and Territories and Insular Affairs Subcommittees has been held by one staff member, James H. Gamble, since the 87th Congress. In connection with the responsibilities of the Federal Government for the Trust Territory of the Pacific and other U.S. territories, an ever-increasing amount of legislation has been before the Committee. These increased responsibilities are within the jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Territories and, in the future, will require Mr. Gamble's full time and attention."

"The Committee," Jackson said, "is fortunate in obtaining Mr. Gerard's services to assist in developing new policies and legislative measures designed to serve the needs and interests of the Nation's Indian people. As an American Indian, Mr. Gerard is extremely sensitive to the frustrations, the hopes and the aspirations of the Nation's Indian people. He will, I believe, be in a unique position to work with the Committee in the development of innovative and responsive Federal programs."

Gerard's appointment, according to Jackson, sets the stage for the Interior Committee to launch a far-reaching review of the Indian programs during the 92nd Congress. The Senator added that the kind of intensive review he has in mind is vital at this time because of the "almost overwhelming social, economic and legal

complexities which many Indian people encounter in seeking solutions to their problems."

"These complexities have evolved," Jackson said, "because of the unique historical legal relationship of Indian people with the Federal Government, as well as contemporary economic and social developments. Indian communities have traditionally looked to a single agency -- the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior -- for protection of their lands and resources and assistance in solving the problems many face."

"Today," he said, "the picture is vastly different as a result of the new programs which, for the most part, have resulted from landmark legislation enacted during the past decade. The Indians have become recipients of the services provided in these new programs, which are administered by several major departments and agencies of Government, in addition to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"Indians, generally, qualify for these programs and services, not so much on the basis of their being Indians, but on the same basis as other Americans. While these developments have produced some positive results for Indians, I question whether the total Government expenditures for them are being applied to meet their unique needs and problems in the most efficient and effective manner possible."

Jackson said that the Interior Committee's efforts in the 92nd Congress will not represent just another review of the so-called "Indian problem."

"We want our efforts to result in the establishment of a new Congressional Indian policy that will enable our first Americans to view the future with the assurance of constructive aid and service from the Federal Government, which will be responsive to the needs of Indian communities and Indian people."

Mr. Gerard was born in Browning, Montana, and was graduated from Montana State University with a B.A. in business administration in 1949. His prior Government service includes an assignment as Legislative Assistant and Liaison Officer in the Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. An Air Force veteran, he presently resides in Bowie, Maryland, with his wife, Kay, and their five children.