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BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS Hart - 343-4306

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ANOTHER INDUSTRY ESTABLISHED TO INCREASE INDIAN EMPLOYMENT

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall today described as "welcome news" the plan to establish a $500,000 plastics molding plant at Durant, Okla., which will provide jobs for upwards of 100 Indian men and women. The new installation is being built by a subsidiary of Strombecker Corp., a Chicago manufacturer.

"It is highly gratifying," Secretary Udall said, "that this industry has chosen to locate a new plant in the mid-State area where many Indians live--and where many are in need of jobs. Full-scale cooperation between the industry, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and State and local officials in Oklahoma have resulted in benefits not only for the Indian population but for the community as a whole.

"The Strombecker plant in Durant signals another step forward in our effort to improve the economic lot of American Indians--an effort that has gained great momentum in the past four years."

Forty other plants have been assisted in locating on or near Indian communities in recent years, providing jobs for 1,500 Indians and promising employment for more than double that number as production reaches full capacity. Negotiations are under way with several more expanding businesses. The industries presently operating represent a wide variety of enterprises, including, for example, diamond cutting, electronics parts assembly, textile manufacturing, and production of Indian-design gift items.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs worked with the Durant Industrial Foundation, a community corporation created to assist in financing new industry, and the Oklahoma State Department of Commerce and Industry in helping pave the way for establishing the plastics enterprise in Durant. Operations will begin in a new, 30,000-square-foot structure.

"The Bureau's role is that of catalytic agent," Commissioner of Indian Affairs Philleo Nash said. "Our Industrial Development staff brings together industries in search of new locations and communities in search of new enterprises. Much of the attraction for industries locating on or near Indian reservations lies in the availability of workers. Indians have demonstrated a high degree of manual dexterity and pride in precision workmanship. With training, provided through Bureau funds, they are the answer to a chronic need of many employers."

Production at the new installation, to occupy a 25-acre tract on the western edge of Durant, is scheduled to start in June. At the outset, approximately 75 people will be employed. The payroll will be increased as output gains.

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