Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For an invention that dramatically reduces accident risks and at the same time results in sizeable cost reductions, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall has awarded the highest incentive payment in the history of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to an engineering technician on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana.

Frank H. Roderick, a Bureau of Indian Affairs employee, received a check for $1,350 in recognition of the usefulness of his design for a new type irrigation canal check.

The award-winning invention is called "Rod's Rotating Check." Now being adapted for use on all irrigation canals on Indian reservations, it replaces the use of the plank-on-plank method of diverting canal flows or raising water levels. It resembles a louvered steel fin, inserted between the concrete canal walls at the check point, which can be opened or shut by means of a crank.

The mechanical method of operation does away with the need for inserting planks and then hauling them out again when desired water levels are reached. It takes one man a few minutes to crank Rod's Rotating Check to desired position. It takes three men three hours, using a crane, to insert and remove the standard plank checks.

Equally important, Rod's Rotating Check reduces a serious safety hazard to near zero. During the calendar year 1964, there were 24 stop-work accidents in irrigation operations on Indian reservations, about 90 percent of which involved ditch riders or irrigation operators. Most of these accidents occurred during the process of retrieving silt-anchored check planks.

Roderick may be eligible for further financial recognition of his invention if it is put to use by other Bureaus of the Department of the Interior. Developed while he was on the job, the design is the property of the United States Government.