Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Under a $177,849 contract awarded December 2 to RCA Service Co. of Camden, N.J., the Bureau of Indian Affairs will commence at once a program of occupational training, basic literacy education, counseling and job placement for the Choctaw Indians of Mississippi.

Robert L. Bennett, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, said today in announcing major features of the contract:

"The objective is to break the cycle of poverty that has made family heads helpless to help themselves and has deprived Choctaw children of educational and social opportunities that would enable them to grow beyond their present circumstances. The program will provide to a pilot group of 30 Choctaw families the services of specialists in occupational training, job counseling, family counseling, basic literacy education, job placement and follow-up. We hope that as these families become equipped to work in surrounding communities, other families will take part in the training program."

Bennett continued: "The Choctaw experiment has been in the category of wishful thinking for a long time. It is deeply gratifying to me to be able to put it into operation."

There are about 350 members of the Choctaw tribe living in the vicinity of Philadelphia, Miss. Thirty-four out of every 100 adults in the labor market are chronically unemployed and many others depend entirely upon seasonal work. Illiteracy has contributed largely to the joblessness and has kept the economic and social status of the Choctaw community lagging 30 years behind the Nation as a whole.

RCA Service Co., a technical services subsidiary of RCA, under an earlier BIA contract successfully trained Alaskan Indians and Eskimos for work on the Defense Early Warning System.