Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert L. Bennett announced today a series of shifts in supervisory personnel affecting four Indian reservations and one Area Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

James D. Cornett, formerly a land operations officer with the Zuni Indian Agency in New Mexico, has been appointed superintendent of the Fort Totten (Sioux) Reservation in North Dakota. This is a new position, created to raise the status of the Reservation to agency level. For the past several years the affairs of the Fort Totten Sioux have been administered through the Turtle Mountain Agency at Belcourt, N. Dak.

Don Y. Jensen, superintendent of the Cherokee Agency in western North Carolina, will be assigned to the Aberdeen, S. Dak., Area Office as Assistant Director for Economic Development, effective June 19. He will fill a vacancy left by Owen Morken, who has become Director of the Juneau Area Office. A replacement for Jensen at Cherokee has not yet been named.

James P. Howell, superintendent of the Fort Berthold (Sioux) Agency in South Dakota, will become superintendent of the Tuba City agency (Navajo) in Arizona, effective June 6. He will take up the post vacated through the retirement of Clinton O. Talley.

Slated to succeed Howell at Fort Berthold is James R. Keaton, former Assistant Superintendent of the Western Washington Agency which serves the Indian fishing communities of the Puget Sound region. The transfer is effective on June 19.

Kenneth L. Payton was transferred last month from the Mescalero Apache agency in southern New Mexico to head up the United Pueblos Agency with headquarters in Albuquerque. His move fills the vacancy created when Walter 0. Olson was named head of the newly established Albuquerque Area office several months ago. No replacement has yet been named for the Mescalero Agency.

Biographic Data on New Appointees:

Cornett, a native of Oklahoma, received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1952 from Oklahoma State University at Stillwater. He joined the Bureau of Indian Affairs that same year as a soil conservationist at the Fort Peck Indian Agency in Montana. He later served in a similar post at the Blackfeet Indian Agency in Browning, Mont.; and as Land Operations Officer at the Zuni Agency, in New Mexico.

Jensen, who has been superintendent at the Cherokee Agency since 1963, is a native of Castle Dale, Utah. He joined the Bureau in 1947 as a soil conservationist for the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Agencies in Montana. He has served as soil conservationist at the Blackfeet Agency, Montana; land operations officer at Standing Rock Agency, N. Dak.; and superintendent of the Northern Cheyenne Agency, Lame Deer, Mont.

Howell, an Oklahoma native of Indian descent, has been with the Bureau of Indian Affairs since graduating from Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kans., in 1940, with the exception of four years of military service. His assignments have included administrative posts at Haskell; Western Washington

Agency, Everett, Wash.; Fort Belknap Consolidated Agency, Harlem, Mont.; and as assistant personnel officer at the Aberdeen, S. Dak., Area office.

Keaton, also an Oklahoman by birth, received a Bachelor of Science degree from Utah State University in 1949. From that year until joining the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1952 he was employed as a soil scientist with the Weber Basin Project in Utah and by Swift and Company in Portland, Ore. His first Bureau assignment was as a soil scientist with the Colville Indian Agency at Nespelem, Wash. He has since held posts as a soil conservationist and real estate specialist at the Yakima and Klamath Agencies and at the Muskogee Area office in Oklahoma. Following an 18 month management training assignment in Washington, D. C., Keaton was named Assistant Superintendent at the Western Washington Agency, his last post prior to the present transfer.

Payton, an Oklahoman, received a B.S. degree from Oklahoma A&M College at Stillwater in 1949. The following January he accepted a post as soil conservationist with the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Window Rock, Ariz. He served with the Navajo Agency until March 1958, when he was reassigned as land operations officer at the Consolidated Ute Agency, Colo. In November 1961, he became superintendent of the Mescalero Agency, in New Mexico, a post he has occupied until the present reassignment.

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