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Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall today issued the following statement on education programs for Indian children:

"Indian children in Federal schools are handicapped educationally, economically and geographically through physical and social isolation from the mainstreams of American life. Many are further handicapped by an only partial understanding of the English language, if, indeed, they speak English at all.

"The programs of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, applied to Federal Indian schools over the past six months have been a direct and effective frontal assault on the pressing problems of these youngsters.

"In this short span of time we have seen, not only real progress in closing the gap that separates many Indian children from the non-Indian contemporaries but also a new spirit of enthusiasm and support for education develop in families and tribal leaders in Reservations across the nation.

"The Quie Amendment to this milestone legislation would exclude Federally educated Indian children from this Act and would take from these children the hope of continued progress toward educational equality with the rest of the nation and quash the new hopes and new aspirations developing for the Indian peoples who would assist their children to the life of economic and social equality that has been denied.

"It is inconceivable that these projects which have meant so much in terms of academic progress and improved self-image could be summarily abandoned.

"This program has made an appreciable and measureable difference in the lives and achievement of these children. These programs represent an effective discharge of the federal obligation to these children and should be continued."