Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Louis R. Bruce announced today the award of an initial $36,000 contract to the United Southeastern Tribes, Inc. for the establishment of an Employment Assistance Destination Services Center at Pascagoula, Mississippi.

The awarding of this contract is in keeping with the Commissioner's new thrust to encourage tribal groups to undertake services normally rendered by BIA. The USET, headquartered in Sarasota, Florida, consists of representatives from the Seminole, Miccosukee, Choctaw and Cherokee Indian tribes.

The purpose of the Indian Services Center is to furnish assistance to Indian people in making a smooth transition from reservation to urban living in the Pascagoula area. The Center will offer support services such as orientation, housing, counseling, medical assistance, and recreational and social aid as well as employment assistance.

This contract marks the first venture of this type undertaken by the southeastern tribal groups. The initial funds are for the remainder of FY 1972 with continuation of the program contingent upon its success and availability of funds.

Most of the Indian people have been recruited by the Litton Ship Systems which already employs 230 Indians. These 230 employees represent eleven different tribes and constitute a total of 450 Indian people now residing in Pascagoula.

Commenting on the Center, Commissioner Bruce said, "This contract responds directly to the desires and needs as expressed by the Indians of the southeastern U.S. The high job potential for skilled workers in this region will draw from the pool of trained people who have not found opportunities to use their skills on their home reservations or in other part of the country.

"The scope of services provided by the Service Center was largely suggested by the Indian contractors. We are confident they will do an outstanding job."