Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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New industrial development opportunities for the 16 largest Indian land areas should result from a recent Labor Department ruling, on their eligibility for Federal contracts, Robert L. Bennett, commissioner of Indian Affairs, Department f of the Interior, said today.

Bennett said the Labor Department's Bureau of Employment Security has designated the 16 areas eligible for the first preference in Federal procurement contracts as the result of negotiations conducted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Branch of Commercial and Industrial Development.

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall endorsed the Branch's proposal to Secretary of Labor Willard W. Wirtz as another means of aiding Indians.

The 16 Indian areas now classified as sections of concentrated unemployment Jr underemployment are: Fort Apache, Hopi, Gila River, Papago and San Carlos, all in Arizona; Navajo in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah; Blackfeet, Crow-Northern Cheyenne and Fort Peck in Montana; Acoma-Laguna-Canoncito-Isleta and Zuni in New Mexico; Cherokee in North Carolina; Standing Rock-Cheyenne River in North Dakota and South Dakota; Turtle Mountain in North Dakota; and Pine Ridge and Rosebud in South Dakota.

"This action means that industrial plants located in or near these Indian areas are now eligible for first preference in the award of certain Federal procurement contracts if the firms have an approved plan for employing a portion of the Indian work force on the contract," Commissioner Bennett said.

"This should assist in stabilizing operations of such plants and possibly lead to expansions.

"The possibility is also opened for establishment of new industries in or near these Indian areas if the plants can be established so as to produce the required materials within the contract terms," Bennett added.

The Labor Department announcement explained that employers wishing to establish individual eligibility for their plants must obtain a certificate through the state or local employment offices.

Bennett said this recognition of the need for employment by Indians is another in an increasing list of cooperative actions by Federal agencies to extend more fully to Indians the benefits afforded generally by Federal programs.