**Media Contact:** Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
**For Immediate Release:** December 17, 1958
Print PDF

Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton today announced that the Bureau of Indian Affairs will step up its program of helping natives of Alaska modernize their fishing vessels so that they can compete more effectively by using the most efficient mechanical devices on their seine boats.

A recent development which has increased the efficiency of purse seine fishing in Alaska is the perfecting of a mechanical power block. This device takes advantage of engine power to help haul the seine and is being widely used by fishermen in purse seine operations on both the Pacific and Atlantic Coasts. While some of the native boats have installed the new power blocks during the past year, it was emphasized to Secretary Seaton on his recent trip to Alaska, that the further mechanization of the native fishing fleet would increase its efficiency.

The Indian Bureau's lending program in southeast Alaska is concentrated mainly in the villages of Angoon, Hydaburg, Kake, Klawock and Metlakatla where there are associations of the natives which own salmon canneries. Loans have been made by the Bureau to these associations and they have re-loaned money to their members for acquiring and operating fishing boats. Under the program announced today "the councils of these villages will make additional loans to members for power blocks and other modernization measures.

The associations now owe the United States $1,300,000 on loans previously made for boats and gear. In turn, they had loans outstanding to their individual members last June amounting to $1,100,000 and over $200,000 of cash available for additional loans.

Additional loans of more than $500,000 have been made by the associations this year, to help some members in modernizing their boats and to assist others in acquiring new and larger vessels capable of fishing in open waters. Prior to 1958 most of the native-owned boats were comparatively small and suitable for fishing safely only in the "inside" waters of Alaska.