Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Office of the Secretary
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Assistant Secretary of the Interior Roger Ernst today emphasized that Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Glenn L, Emmons is to be credited for the recent decision to establish a new arts and crafts course at the Santa Fe (N. Mex.) Indian School this coming fall.

The statement was made in a letter to Oliver LaFarge of Santa Fe, nationally known author. Mr. LaFarge wrote in an article published by the Santa Fe New Mexican on June 26 that the decision to establish the course was the result of intervention of the Secretary of the Interior, at the urgent request of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board.â□□

â□□On this point, â□□Assistant Secretary Ernst told Mr. LaFarge, â□□I am afraid you have been seriously misinformed. â□□

The text of the letter to Mr. LaFarge follows:

â□□My attention has just been called to an article by you in the Santa Fe New Mexican of June 26 concerning the decision to establish a new arts and crafts course for Indian students at the Santa Fe Indian School this coming academic year. In writing the article you were apparently under the impression that the course was established over the opposition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs through intervention by the Secretary of the Interior.

â□□On this point I am afraid you have been seriously misinformed. The fact is that the decision to establish the arts and crafts course at the Santa Fe school was made solely by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Glenn L. Emmons. Neither I nor any other officer of the Department outside of the Bureau intervened in the making of this decision; none of us was ever asked to do so by members of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board.

"Commissioner Emmons decided to establish this course after long and thoughtful consideration for two major reasons. One was his deep personal interest in the future of Indian arts and crafts, the other was his equally profound desire to provide artistically talented Indian youngsters with training which will sharpen their skills and enhance their earnings prospects in their chosen vocation. He deserves full credit for the decision and your impression that the Bureau of Indian Affairs was opposed on this matter by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and overruled by the Department of the Interior is apparently based on an unfortunate misunderstanding of the facts.

â□□Since your article was given newspaper publicity, I am taking the liberty of releasing this letter to the press as a means of setting the public record straight.â□□