

The threat to health constitutes the primary and most powerful impulse for effective control of environmental contamination problems in this country. Those groups who seek to slow down such control efforts invariable do so on the ground that the health hazards have not been proved or are not really serious; conversely, many groups whose activities are most directly affected by the application of control measures will take whatever action is necessary if dangers to human health can be demonstrated. Any action at the Federal level which would make public health considerations a secondary factor would clearly slow down the Nation's progress toward effective control of air pollution and efficient management of solid waste disposal problems.

S. 886 also provides for the transfer of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

The problem of the most appropriate location of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Federal Government has been considered over many years. The Indian affairs program is comprehensive and covers nearly every aspect of Indian life.

1. Several functions of the Bureau are completely foreign to this Department. They include the building and operation of irrigation projects, the regulation of tribal government, the authorization and regulation of tribal and individual economic enterprise, the overseeing of law and order on Indian reservations, the management of forest lands, and the building and maintenance of public roads on Indian reservations. The effect the transfer would have on these important functions should be carefully weighed.

2. The Indians themselves have generally opposed transfer of the Bureau from the Department of the Interior. Since the transfer would affect them, there should be consultation with the Indian people before any decision is reached.

We believe further attention should be given to these matters before this transfer is made.

Further, S. 886 provides for the transfer of the Office of Territories to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

The transfer of the Office would bring to this Department an organization whose functions go beyond the current scope of the functions the Department administers. The Office is concerned not only with the social advancement of the Territories but with their economic and political development. Involvement in Territorial affairs would present the Department with issues concerning which it has no present experience or expertise. Further study should be undertaken before any commitment for transfer of the Office to the Department is made.

A word should be said about the provision in the bill for the transfer of personnel and property. The provisions providing for the transfer of personnel and property, cited in Section 5(h) and 10(h) of the bill, are as follows: Secretary Cohen:)