Weaver pressed to take a stand on issue of Big Mountain Indians

By Paul Sturtz

Of the Emerald

Local supporters of Arizona's Big Mountain Indian people banged a drum, chanted and then took the elevator up to Congressman Jim Weaver's office Wednesday, demanding Weaver take a stand on the 1974 relocation act. Under the 1974 act, the Big Mountain people face relocation from their homelands in Arizona by July.

Big Mountain Support Group members were met by three Weaver aides who called an impromptu press conference and reported that in the last week. their office has received 40 calls about the issue while Weaver's Washington, D.C., office has been barraged with 35 letters.

This upsurge of calls and letters was sparked by the decision of Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz., to allow only three witnesses in an Interior and Insular Affairs Committee public hearing held this morning. The hearing will discuss a Udall-sponsored relocation bill, which Big Mountain supporters see as little different from the 1974 relocation act it would replace.

Udall, head of the committee. is seen by Big Mountain sup-porters as trying to "fast-track" his bill through Congress without proper testimony.

Local supporters of the Navajo and Hopi Indians threatened with removal believe Weaver has a unique position to help repeal the relocation act as the third-ranking congressman on the committee.

The three witnesses allowed at the hearing - the heads of each tribal council and an Interior Department spokeman do not represent the people of Big Mountain, say supporters like Guy Burton, who recently returned from Big Mountain.

Grattan Kerans, a Weaver aide, said Weaver has written Udall telling him it is unacceptable for only three witnesses to be heard, and that testimony must be expanded to include more of the adversely affected people.

'The congressman is not going to be stampeded into an action he wouldn't support." Kerans said. "Subsequent hearings must not be ramrodded through; he will not be a party

Alan Stein, another Eugene resident who recently visited Big Mountain "to see for my own eyes what's happening. says the Udall-sponsored bill would fix some of the worst aspects of the original relocation bill but would still disrupt people's lives by allowing mining of uranium and coal on their

The bill makes no provision for people to continue farming. collecting herbs and maintaining their traditional lives, he

Demonstrators urged people to call Weaver's Washington office at 202-225-6416 or his local office at 687-6732 to urge him to vote no on the McCain-Udall Bill and to introduce legislation to repeal the original relocation

When asked if Weaver would propose such a law. Kerans said he had not talked to the congressman yet about that

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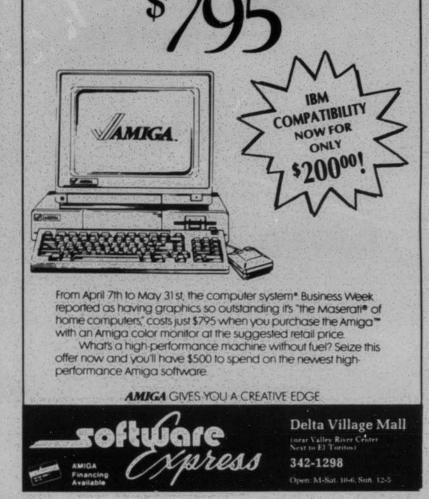
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In the wake of Tuesday's anti-apartheid rally, the Pioneer Mother statue outside Susan Campbell Hall holds a sign asking for the divestment of University funds from companies doing business in South Africa.

Photo by James Marks







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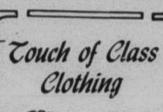
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