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## Mondale Cites Indian Suicide Rate and Assails Education

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Senator Walter F. Mondale said Monday that recent reports indicate that the suicide rate among young Indians is the highest in the nation.

The senator commented yesterday on the suicide of Dane White, 13, who hanged himself 10 days ago in the Breckenridge, Minn.

jail where he had been held six weeks awaiting a juvenile-court hearing.

"The tragic death of this helpless child is part of the shocking national trend of suicides among young Indians.

"IT STEMS from the educational system which destroys the Indian's respect for himself and his culture," Mondale said in a telephone interview.

Mondale, D-Minn., is the acting chairman of the subcommittee on Indian education of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.

Prominent psychiatrists and psychologists, including Karl Menninger from the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kans., testified before the committee last month on the mental-health conditions of young Indians on reservations and in Bureau of In-

dian Affairs (BIA) boarding schools.

Mondale attributed the suicide of Dane and other young Indians to an "identity crisis" resulting from educational experiences "depicting the Indian as a pagan savage.

"THE PROBLEMS are particularly pronounced in boarding schools where children are separated from parents and community and sometimes discouraged from even visiting their parents.

"Indians find themselves alienated from their own culture," Mondale said yesterday.

Arrangements had been made through the BIA Agency in Sisseton, S.D., to place Dane, 13, in the Pierre, S.D., Indian Boarding School.

The principal of the school, James Vance, said last week that although all of his teachers are white, most of his staff at the school, including teacher aides, are Indians. Vance pointed to a new program at the school emphasizing the Indian culture in the classroom.

**MONDALE SAID** one witness testified at the hearing that in one jail near a Navaho reservation, "In a single year three Indian youths hanged themselves from the same water pipe in the same cell."

"Robert Kennedy had spent some time with one of the youths who hanged himself,"

Mondale recalled. "I was told that the experience had a lasting impact on Sen. Kennedy."

Kennedy had set up the subcommittee on Indian education. When Kennedy was assassinated last June, Mondale became acting chairman of the committee.

Mondale said the federal educational system destroys Indian self respect in several ways: "By showing no respect for Indian language and culture, which is often taught by people who are anti-Indian, and by the use of teaching methods which fail to deal with the human and psychological needs of the Indian child."

**WHEN MONDALE** asked the BIA how many psychiatrists and psychologists they employed in their school system, he said "they could identify only three psychologists and no psychiatrists in the entire system."

Dane had never been approached by the BIA while he was in jail. Nor had he seen a psychologist or psychiatrist. His father and his court-appointed attorney, Donald Pedersen, had made the arrangements with the BIA to place Dane at the Pierre boarding school.

Mondale said subcommittee hearings will be resumed next month in Washington, D.C.



Mondale