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TO THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE:

BY LETTER OF OCTOBER 12, 1960, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR ADMINISTRATION ASKS WHETHER CERTAIN RECREATIONAL EQUIPMENT MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS AND FURNISHED TO SEVERAL WEATHER STATIONS IN THE ARCTIC REGION OF NORTHERN CANADA.

IT IS EXPLAINED THAT UNDER AUTHORITY CONTAINED IN THE ACT OF FEBRUARY 12, 1946, 60 STAT. 4, 15 U.S.C. 313A, THE WEATHER BUREAU HAS ESTABLISHED A METEOROLOGICAL REPORTING NETWORK CONSISTING OF FIVE STATIONS IN COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE OF CANADA. EACH STATION IS MANNED BY FOUR FULL-TIME AND THREE SUMMER-TIME WEATHER BUREAU EMPLOYEES. CANADA PROVIDES AN EQUAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES. IT IS STATED THAT BECAUSE OF THE ISOLATED LOCATIONS OF THESE STATIONS AND THEIR INACCESSIBILITY DURING WINTER MONTHS, SUPPLIES ARE SHIPPED BY BOAT ONLY ONCE A YEAR, WITH SUPPLEMENTAL AIRLIFT IN SPRING AND FALL. FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES ASSIGNED TO THESE STATIONS MUST AGREE TO REMAIN FIFTEEN MONTHS AND ARE GIVEN SPECIAL INDOCTRINATION AND TRAINING FOR SURVIVAL IN THE ARCTIC PRIOR TO THEIR DEPARTURE. DURING THIS TRAINING AND INDOCTRINATION PERIOD, EACH EMPLOYEE IS CAREFULLY SCREENED IN ORDER TO ASSURE, IN SO FAR AS IS POSSIBLE, THAT HE IS SUITED PHYSICALLY AND TEMPERAMENTALLY TO ADJUST TO THE CONFINEMENT AND RIGOROUS LIFE IN THE ARCTIC. DESPITE CAREFUL SCREENING, THERE HAVE BEEN OCCASIONS SINCE ESTABLISHMENT OF THESE STATIONS, WHERE EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO ADJUST TO THE ENVIRONMENT, MAKING IT NECESSARY TO EFFECT A REPLACEMENT BY MEANS OF AN EMERGENCY AIRLIFT AT CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE AND AT SERIOUS JEOPARDY TO GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT.

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY POINTS OUT THAT THE ACT OF JUNE 2, 1948, 62 STAT. 286, 15 U.S.C. 328, AUTHORIZES THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS TO TRANSFER TO THE WEATHER BUREAU WITHOUT CHARGE AND SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE BUREAU OF THE BUDGET, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES WHICH ARE SURPLUS TO THEIR NEEDS AND ARE NECESSARY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT, MAINTENANCE, AND OPERATION OF THESE ARCTIC WEATHER STATIONS. HE ALSO POINTS OUT THAT, FREQUENTLY, THERE ARE AVAILABLE RECREATIONAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES SUCH AS MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, BASEBALL EQUIPMENT, HORSESHOE PITCHING GAMES, PING PONG TABLES, BILLIARD TABLES, AND SIMILAR EQUIPMENT THAT COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR USE BY WEATHER BUREAU PERSONNEL AT THOSE STATIONS WITHOUT FURTHER COST TO THE GOVERNMENT EXCEPT FOR THE COST OF TRANSPORTATION.

IT IS URGED THAT THESE ITEMS ARE SUCH AS CANNOT BE FURNISHED BY THE EMPLOYEE AND THAT THE FURNISHING THEREOF BY THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SERVE TO MINIMIZE THE PROBLEMS OF EMPLOYEE MORALE. THIS IN TURN WOULD PROVIDE MORE ASSURANCE FOR THE SUCCESSFUL OPERATION OF THE NETWORK AND SAVINGS WOULD BE REALIZED THROUGH THE

REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF REPLACEMENTS NOW REQUIRED AND WHICH, AS PREVIOUSLY INDICATED, ARE OFTEN MADE AT CONSIDERABLE RISK TO GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT.

THE FACTS PRESENTED ABOVE ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE CONSIDERED IN DECISION OF AUGUST 10, 1938, 18 COMP. GEN. 147. THAT CASE INVOLVED A CONSTRUCTION PROJECT AT MIDWAY ISLAND AND IT WAS ADMINISTRATIVELY URGED THAT PROVIDING OF RECREATIONAL EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES AT THIS REMOTE LOCATION WAS NECESSARY TO THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF THE WORKING FORCE. AFTER CONSIDERING THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 3678, REVISED STATUTES, WHICH RESTRICTS THE USE OF APPROPRIATED FUNDS SOLELY TO THE OBJECTS FOR WHICH APPROPRIATED, IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT EVEN THOUGH THE FURNISHING OF SUCH EQUIPMENT MIGHT BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE, THE PROVIDING OF EQUIPMENT FOR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTES AN EXPENSE WHICH IS PERSONAL TO SUCH EMPLOYEES AND MAY NOT BE PAID FROM APPROPRIATED FUNDS. SEE, ALSO, 27 COMP. GEN. 679.

IN THE PRESENT CASE, HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE ISOLATED LOCATIONS OF THESE ARCTIC WEATHER STATIONS, THE CONFINEMENT TO THE STATIONS OF THE EMPLOYEES DURING A LARGE PART OF THE YEAR, THE CONSEQUENT PROBLEM OF ADJUSTMENT OF EMPLOYEES TO ENVIRONMENT, AND THE DIFFICULTIES OF REMOVING AND REPLACING EMPLOYEES WHO ARE UNABLE SO TO ACCOMMODATE THEMSELVES, IT SEEMS REASONABLE TO CONSIDER THAT EQUIPMENT INTENDED TO ALLEVIATE THOSE CONDITIONS HAS A DIRECT CONNECTION WITH AND IS ESSENTIAL TO THE EFFICIENT AND SUCCESSFUL OPERATION OF THE NETWORK. FURTHERMORE, UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, AND CONSIDERING THAT THE TOURS OF DUTY ARE RELATIVELY SHORT TOGETHER WITH THE ATTENDANT TURNOVER IN PERSONNEL, IT APPEARS UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT OR REQUIRE THAT THE EMPLOYEES PURCHASE AND TRANSPORT THIS EQUIPMENT TO THE STATIONS AT THEIR PERSONAL EXPENSE.

CONSEQUENTLY, IN VIEW OF THE FACTS SET FORTH BY THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY, IF IT BE ADMINISTRATIVELY DETERMINED THAT THE EQUIPMENT IS NECESSARY AT THESE STATIONS TO BETTER ASSURE SUCCESSFUL OPERATION OF THE NETWORK, AND THE TRANSFER IS APPROVED BY THE BUREAU OF THE BUDGET, WE WILL NOT OBJECT TO THE PAYMENT OF TRANSPORTATION COSTS INVOLVED IN TRANSPORTING THE EQUIPMENT TO THE NETWORK STATIONS.