



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

For Release AUGUST 12, 1960

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT FAVORS BILL TURNING OVER 527 ACRES OF GOVERNMENT LAND
TO INDIAN TRIBES ON FLATHEAD RESERVATION IN MONTANA

The Department of the Interior today recommended enactment of legislation that would turn over to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Indian Tribes of Montana 527 acres of Government-owned land on the Flathead Reservation valued at \$38,207.

The acreage recommended for transfer was bought by the Government from the Indians in 1904 for \$958.75 as part of an area to be used for Indian Bureau administration. It is no longer needed for this purpose. The only building on the land is owned by the tribal organization.

In reporting to Congress on S. 3004 and H.R. 10208, two identical companion bills, the Department recommended enactment but proposed for main amendments.

One amendment would identify more clearly the lands involved and would exclude from the transfer lands that are still needed by the Government and others that have been alienated and are no longer owned by the Government. The bill in its present form provides for transfer of 705 acres and includes 178 acres recommended by the Department for deletion.

A second recommended amendment would permit the Indian Claims Commission to decide whether the present value of the transferred lands should be deducted from any judgment awarded to the tribes under the Indian Claims Commission Act. In its present form the bill prohibits such deduction.

A third amendment would eliminate a provision in the bill directing the Department to transfer to the tribes other similar properties when they become excess to its needs. The Department's report called this provision "premature" and recommended that decision be deferred until the properties become excess.

The fourth amendment would eliminate a section in the bill which provides that the legislation is to become effective only after acceptance by the tribal council. Pointing out that the tribal council has already asked for the legislation, the report stated that the "effective date" section was thus not needed and would only complicate title records.

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