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“The machinery we now have for carrying out our trusteeship responsibilities to Indians is inadequate," Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton told a Senate subcommittee today. He urged prompt action on a bill that would establish an Indian Trust Counsel Authority.

Secretary Morton's remarks were presented in a hearing before the subcommittee on Indian Affairs of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. The bill under review is one of several urged by President Nixon in a 1970 legislative package designed to strengthen Indian rights and opportunities within the framework of a continuing Federal trusteeship of Indian resources.

The Indian Trust Counsel Authority proposal would establish an independent entity to function as advocate of the trust resource rights and interests of Indians "untrammeled by other consideration of public policy," the Secretary said. It would also provide legal services to Indians comparable to those a private individual could expect to obtain from his private attorney. It would not preclude Indian hiring of private legal aid.

"Both in appearance and in fact, and both for the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice, there is frequently an inherent conflict of interest between the requirements of the (Indian) trusteeship and the broader responsibility to the people of the United States," Secretary Morton advised the subcommittee.

In the same testimony, he also called attention to additional proposals recommended by the Administration, which, as a package, he said would enable Indians to "protect and preserve their resources, raise their standard of living, and commence the cure of other ills they suffer."

These measures include a plan for additional financing aid to Indian tribes and groups, and authority to transfer control of Bureau of Indian Affairs operations to Indian governing bodies or Indian groups.