Media Contact: Office of the Secretary
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The Department of the Interior today released the text of letters from Under Secretary Elmer F. Bennett to Rep. Lee Metcalf of Montana and Rep. George S. McGovern of South Dakota on the Indian revolving loan fund. The text of the identical letters follows:

Office of Under Secretary

October 3, 1960

Dear Mr. Metcalf:

Our attention has recently been directed to a news report of an exchange of correspondence between you and Senator Kennedy. It was amazing for us to read that portions of the Indian program recommended by this Department to the Congress on June 5, 1959, more than 15 months ago, has now received your support and that of Senator Kennedy.

As you know, this Department recommended to the Congress that the Indian revolving loan fund be increased from $10 million to $25 million. This recommendation was made in connection with legislation designed to resolve the problems of Indian heirship.

We suggested legislation which would prevent the loss to Indians of important heirship lands while at the same time permitting the Indians to deal with lands or interest in lands that are now in multiple ownership. We informed the Congress that more than one-half of the 60,000 allotted Indian tracts apprising more than 13 million acres are now in multiple ownership and that an additional 2,000 estates are being probated each year. In some instances the interests of individual owners have to be expressed by fractions with denominators in the millions. Rental payable to the Indian owners of these lands sometimes amounts to only a few pennies a year and in many instances proper use cannot be made of the land because one of the joint owners is either absent or his whereabouts is unknown.

After we suggested the $15 million increase in the tribal loan fund, the House of Representatives enacted H. R. 1150 7lhieh substantially accepted our suggestions with the execution that the heirship provision was limited to the State of Minnesota rather than applicable to all of the United States. That bill was reported from the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee on May 25 end passed on June 6 in an admirable display of bipartisan interest in the welfare of our Indian citizens.

It is reported in the press that you stated “Kennedy threw his weight behind a House--approved bill to increase the authorization of the Indian Revolving Loan Fund and the bill cleared the Senate Indian Subcommittee.” We are pleased to have this expression of new interest in the welfare of our Indian citizens. Furthermore, it is unfortunate, in our opinion, if this indication of his support is correct, that he did not request the Senate to complete the action begun by the House. Certainly" with the Senate of the United States controlled by an overwhelming majority of members of the Senators political party, it would seem it Gould have been enacted. Particularly is this true since this bill passed the House without objection end, as we said previously, with bipartisan support.

In closing, let me state that we commend the expression of your interest in the problems involved in Indian Affair's. Perhaps this much-needed legislation will reach fruition in the next session with more active leadership and coordination among those in the Congress who are interested in Indian affairs.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd) Elmer F. Bennett

Elmer F. Bennett

Under Secretary

Honorable Lee Metcalf

Member of Congress

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