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The Bureau of Indian Affairs has agreed to make loans that may be needed for reactivation of a tribally operated steer enterprise on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Montana, the Department of the Interior announced today.

Prime significance of the move, Commissioner Philleo Nash pointed out, is that it will permit the Northern Cheyenne Indians to make use of their own lands in a business which holds promise of providing good economic returns to the Tribe and job opportunities for individual tribal members. The enterprise will be owned and operated by the Tribe as a Federal corporation and individual tribal members will, in effect, be stockholders.

Plans developed by the Tribe call for eventually building up a herd of 5,000 head, for hiring a professional manager, and for seeking technical help from Montana State College.

The Northern Cheyenne Steer Enterprise was established in 1937 and was financed by loans received from the Bureau over a period of 10 years. All of these were repaid in full. In 1947, the Enterprise had 2,000 head of cattle on hand, debt free, and about $50,000 in cash. Subsequently, however, the condition of the Enterprise deteriorated and it was terminated in 1957.

"Reactivation of the program," Commissioner Nash said, "has been under consideration for a long time. With the experience gained in operation of the Enterprise, it should be possible to develop a plan which will overcome the difficulties experienced in the past. “

The Tribe is planning to make its first purchase of steers in the spring of 1963.