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The Department of the Interior today proposed legislation which would enable all of its Indian, programs to be granted to tribes for their administration and would channel an additional $25 million in bloc grants for economic and tribal development.

Entitled the "Indian Tribal Government Grant Act," the legislation provides, first, a general granting authority which would permit the Secretary of the Interior and any tribe to enter into a grant arrangement for the tribe's performance of programs and activities now performed under existing appropriation authorizations by the Bureau of Indian Affairs staff.

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton said the legislation is designed to carry out the policy of promoting Indian self-determination set forth by President Nixon in his July 1970 message to the Congress on Indian affairs.

"The bill aims at achieving the greatest possible degree of Indian control, consistent with trust responsibilities, in the planning and administration of federally funded programs serving Indian tribes," Secretary Morton said.

This proposal, the Secretary stressed, should be viewed as complementary to Departmental and other proposals aimed at achieving increased Indian self-determination by means of tribal takeovers of Federal programs or contractual arrangements.

Under the general grant authority in the bill, greater Indian control and involvement would be permitted in the planning and administration of the local governmental and other programs now controlled by BIA employees who are responsible to Federal officials rather than to the elected tribal government.

The second major function of the bill is to make available $25 million to tribes in part on an entitlement basis and in part based on an evaluation of their plans and needs. This part of the proposal stems from the President's Human Resources Message sent to the Congress on March 1, 1973, in which the President stated:

"I shall propose new legislation to foster Indian self-determination by developing an Interior Department program of bloc grants to federally recognized tribes as a replacement for a number of existing economic and resource development programs. The primary purpose of these grants would be to provide tribal governments with funds which they could use at their own discretion to promote development of their reservations. “

Tribes receiving grants under this part of the proposal would be authorized to spend the funds for four major purposes:

Strengthening tribal government including executive direction, planning, financial management, and technical assistance;

Developing natural resources, and construction, improvement, maintenance, and operation of community facilities;

(3) Economic development, employment assistance, work experience, and training, including special youth programs in support of these activities; and

(4) Land acquisition in connection with these purposes.