Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton today announced he has ordered a thorough reexamination of the Department 1s favorable report on S. 332, a bill to validate existing land titles and liberalize future land sales on the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana.

He directed Assistant Secretary Roger Ernst to proceed immediately with the review. Assistant Secretary Ernst supervises the Indian Bureau and three other bureaus in the Department.

Secretary Seaton said the review is needed, "in light of apparent inconsistencies between the department's report on the currently pending legislation" and testimony at the House Indian Affairs Subcommittee's hearings October 18 and 19 at the Crow Agency in Montana.

He said he understood the Department's information was furnished by the Indian Bureau through its Montana area and agency offices. "Above all, I expect a full and accurate report of the facts to be furnished me expeditiously so that I may, in turn, communicate them to the

Assistant Secretary Ernst was told to use every appropriate departmental facility he might need in the inquiry.

S.332 would repeal provisions in a 1920 law which impose acreage limitations on sales of crow Indian land. The Department's March 11, 1957 report, urging enactment of the repeal, noted that violations of the acreage ceilings had been discovered. The report explained how Commissioner of Indian Affairs Glenn L. Emmons suspended all Crow Reservation sales late in 1955 when he learned of the violations, and later lifted the suspension but ordered strict observance of the 1920 limitations.

The Department's report also said S. 332 was introduced at the request of the Crow Tribe, which passed a resolution on April 14, 1956, urging validation of earlier land conveyances made in violation of the 1920 law. The report related that one of the explanations given for the violations was a widespread local impression that the 1920 limitations had been repealed.

After the Department submitted its favorable report, the Crow Tribal Council reversed its position, and now opposes repeal, Secretary Seaton was told.