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The Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior today confirmed its agreement with leaders of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe of South Dakota on a major program of tribal land consolidation.

The program was announced by the tribal leaders in Washington on December 5.

To help finance the operation, the Bureau will extend the tribe a loan of $500,000 from its revolving loan fund.

Commissioner Glenn L. Emmons said that an unusually large loan is being made in this case for four main reasons. One is because the program developed by the Rosebud leaders is one of the soundest of its kind presented by any tribal organization in recent years. Secondly, the tribe has shown unusual managerial ability over the past four years. Thirdly, the prospects of repayment are excellent. Finally, the consolidation program will eventually decrease the Bureau's cost of administering trust lands on the reservation.

“The action we have taken on this tribally developed program," Mr. Emmons said, "should help to disprove unfounded statements recently circulated, that the B1~eau is seeking to break up tribal groups and separate them from their land resources.

"It has been our consistent purpose right along to help the tribes in making the most constructive and beneficial use of their available resources. As trustees, however, we have a responsibility to safeguard the tribes against unwise or rash plans that have little or no prospect of success. We are delighted to cooperate fully with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe on this particular program.”

A copy of the Tribe's press release describing the new land consolidation program is attached.

PRESS RELEASE BY ROSEBUD SIOUX INDIAN TRIBE, DECEMBER 5. 1958

Leaders of the Rosebud Sioux Indian Tribe of South Dakota today announced that they have reached agreement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs on a major program of land consolidation which will more than double the possibilities for Indian families to make a living from livestock operations on the reservation.

The goal of the plan is to provide the resources so that 365 Indian families can earn a livelihood directly from the reservation lands. Only 141 are engaged in the cattle business on the reservation today.

In announcing the plan, Robert Burnette, President of the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Council, called it "the culmination of four years of "careful tribal planning and hard work. II He emphasized the cooperation the tribal group has received throughout from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Under the new program the tribal organization will work toward a consolidation of its lands on the reservation. Today these holdings total 337,000 acres. In many cases, however, they are separated and

broken apart by other holdings in a way that severely limits their usefulness.

To correct this, the tribe will take two major steps. It will buy up about 26,500 acres owned by individual Indians. It will also acquire full tile to an additional 800 tracts totaling about 117,000 acres in which it now has merely a fractional interest. Individual Indians hold most of the ownership of these lands.

To start the program off, the tribe is receiving a $500,000 loan from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In addition, it is hoping to realize about $800,000 by selling scattered tribal tracts, totaling about 16,000 acres, in the eastern part of the reservation Where comparatively few of the Indians live and consolidations are not feasible.

Congressional authorization is necessary before Indian tribal trust land can be sold. The tribal leaders are consulting with their members to get their views on asking next Congress for legislation authorizing sale of the 16,000 acres of tribal land in trust. Such legislation would reduce the over-all boundaries of the reservation and take it completely out of three South Dakota counties - Tripp, Gregory and Lyman. The remaining reservation lands would be in Mellette and Todd counties.

Apart from the land transactions, the tribal organization also plans to make cattle available to its individual members on a loan basis. An individual donor has agreed to supply the tribe with 200 head as a starter. Indications are that, if the program works out, additional cattle will be contributed.

"We realize," Tribal President Burnette said, "that the lands of the Rosebud reservation cannot provide a decent living for all of the 5,500 people who now live there. However, we believe that this new program will enable us to make the fullest and most beneficial possible use of the resources that we have.

"About 50 percent of our population is under 2l years of age and another 20 percent is over 65. We are aiming primarily at the remaining 30 percent who are in the productive working age bracket.

"Our purpose is not to buy up lands so that they can be leased to non-Indians. In fact, many of the tracts we intend to buy are being leased today and are yielding only a few dollars a year of rental income for the owners. If properly consolidated and utilized the same lands can produce a decent livelihood for additional Indian families.

"For those who are not interested in actually operating the lands or not sufficiently skilled, we are hoping to provide employment in other ways. For one thing, we are planning to enlarge the irrigation projects on the reservation and this would provide wage work for many of our people. For another, we are hoping to attract, some industries into the general area.

"The long-range goal we have in mind is not only economic but educational. We expect that this new program will make it possible for many more of the Rosebud Sioux families to keep their children in school through the high-school level. Our experience has been that the young people who graduate from high school more often than not prefer to seek a living away from the reservation. So the net effect over a period of years should be to reduce the population on the reservation to a level which the lands can actually support.

"We have demonstrated over the past four years that the present tribal council can operate successfully a program of this type. During this period the income of the tribe from present resources has been

steadily increased from $63,000 in 1954 to $229,000 in the most recent fiscal year. While this record would not have been possible without the substantial help we have received from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, we are deeply gratified at the confidence the Bureau has now shown in us by agreeing to cooperate on our new land consolidation program. We regard it as a major step forward for the Rosebud Sioux people.”
