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Acting Secretary of the Interior Hatfield Chilson announced today that the Bureau of Indian Affairs will delay until the end of the present congressional session any additional sales of Indian trust land requested by the Indian owners.

The action was taken in. compliance with a request by Senator James E. Murray in his capacity as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

The delay will not apply on the Klamath Reservation of Oregon because the trust status of all allotted lands will terminate there next August 13 and the termination law specifically provides for departmental assistance to these Indians in the sale of their heirship lands.

In a letter of May 13 to Secretary Seaton, Senator Murray indicated that questionnaires on Indian land sales had been sent by the Committee to Indian Bureau field officers and tribal officials at each local jurisdiction with a request for return of the information by June 15. He asked for a moratorium on all land sales requested by the Indians until the Committee could complete a study and analysis of the completed questionnaires.

In a reply to Senator Murray dated May 28, Mr. Chilson emphasized the property rights of individual Indians that are involved.

“It is definitely the policy of the Department or the Bureau,” he said, “to encourage, suggest, or advise the individual Indian allottees to dispose of their land holdings. At the same time we believe that we are democratically duty bound to honor their individual property rights the same as any other American citizen.

“Imposition of an over-all moratorium for an indefinite period, Mr. Chilson added, would involve a curtailment of the property rights of individual Indians and would work a hardship on many Indian owners. Moreover, he said, the Department is hesitant to take such a step even for a limited period and is doing so only in response to Senator Murray's specific request for the balance of the present congressional session.

In his letter Mr. Chilson also called Senator Murray's attention to a May 15 statement of policy on Indian land sales by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Glenn L. Emmons. The new policy, he said, will make it easier for both tribal organizations and Indian heirs to buy up lands offered for sale by Indian owners and the net effect will be to keep more of the lands in Indian ownership.