Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Trust restrictions on allotted Indian lands, scheduled to expire in calendar year 1960, have been extended for an additional five years, Acting Secretary of the Interior Elmer F. Bennett announced today.

This order, and a similar order issued last December extending trust restrictions expiring during 1959, reverse a custom started in 1951 of limiting such extensions to a maximum of only one year. In 1951, the then Acting Secretary was considering terminating trust status on individual Indian lands on a year-by-year basis. Each trust case would be subject to review every year.

Acting Secretary Bennett said the new orders reemphasize the Department's stated policy of taking all precautions against ending Federal supervision over Indians before they are competent to end their status as Federal wards.

The General Allotment Act of February 8, 1887, authorized allotments of land for individuals both on reservations and on the public domain.

Homesteads for Indians off-reservations were also authorized by an Act of February 28, 1891.

The 1934 Indian Reorganization Act extended trust restrictions over lands of Indians who accepted the Act's provisions. Tribes and groups which were not so covered--so-called "unorganized" Indians--have had their trust protection extended for varying periods, until the 1951 decision established the one-year rule.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs said that it had no accurate estimate of the acreage covered by the new order, but that it would run into the thousands.