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The Department of the Interior favors enactment of legislation initiated by the Choctaw Indian Tribe of Oklahoma which provides for disposition of the Tribe's lands and funds and for eventual termination of its special relations with the Federal Government, Assistant Secretary Roger Ernst announced today.

In reporting to Congress on H. R. 2722, Mr. Ernst emphasized that the bill was introduced in Congress at the request of tribal officials.

In the background of the present bill, Mr. Ernst said, is a 1906 law which was intended to provide for disposition of all lands of the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma either by allotment to individual members or by sale, for the division of all tribal funds among the members, and for dissolution of the tribal governments. Enactment of H. R. 2722, he added, will make it possible to complete this program for the Choctaw Tribe, which is one of the Five Civilized Tribes.

The bill applies only to tribal assets and will have no effect on the allotted lands of individual Choctaw Indians which will continue to be governed by the provisions of existing law.

Three classes of land will be affected by the bill. One consists of 7,731 acres of unallotted tribal land in which the Choctaw Tribe has a three-fourths interest and the Chickasaw Tribe a one-fourth interest. A second includes 8,610 acres purchased by the Government and held in trust for the Choctaw Tribe under legislation of the 1930's. The third category would take in any submarginal lands bought for the use of the Tribe by the Government during the 1930's.

So far the records of the Department have not disclosed any lands in this third category. However, since a search of the records is still continuing and might eventually turn up something, the Department favored retention of the third category in the bill.