Bureau of Indian Affairs Agrees To Make Recommendations To Congress Favoring Release of Blackfeet Tribal Funds To Develop Local Enterprise

If recommendations of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Chicago has any effect upon the new national congress when it takes up its work of appropriating funds, a substantial sum will be voted for various projects of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, according to Leo M. Kennerly, secretary of the Tribal Business Council, member of the official delegation that conferred with the Bureau heads this month.

The delegation included, besides Kennerly, Richard Grant Sr., chairman of the council; George Pambrun, Joseph Iron and William Buffalohat, Delegates-at-large were Theodore Last Star and Adam Whitehurst. Supt. F. H. McBride accompanied the group to serve in an advisory capacity.

The Chicago meeting enabled Bureau heads to appreciate the magnitude of Blackfeet Indians' work towards the war effort, and to realize the need of release of portion of the tribal funds which lie idle in the U.S. Treasury, that local projects may be all the more productive at this critical period, Kennerly said.

Their first conference was with Commissioner John Collier and Assistant Commissioner Wm. Zimmerman.

Other vital conferences were with the various division heads, who are in charge of local projects including land, extension service, health and welfare work and mineral exploitation.

The impressive showing made by Indian growers this year in the production of cattle, sheep and wool was cited. Kennerly said.

With this as the basis, a plea was made for $75,000 with which to enhance production in 1943. $25,000 was asked to finance the land purchase program. The money would be used by the Tribal Council in behalf of Indians acquiring patented road lands owned by the whites, and for inherited lands.

With need for maintenance of buildings occupied by Indian families, $25,000 was asked to carry on this program. Expedition of the oil lease procedure, with Supt. McBride being it given more authority in getting advertised was urged. Successful quest of this would eliminate considerable useless "red tape," Kennerly said. It would be a responsibility delegated by the Secretary of the Interior to the local Indian Agency.

With regard to the money sought, Kennerly said, that the Indian Affairs office can do is to make recommendations to congress. Committees on Indian Affairs of congress would give the proposal careful study, with either favorable or unfavorable report.

Unlike most other appropriations made, Kennerly said, that of the Blackfeet Tribe is their own property, the Tribal Council feeling that in behalf of the war effort, it will yield greater return in a capital investment now than it usually could in ordinary times.

The delegation also brought to the attention of the Bureau of Indian Affairs the desire of Indians being placed on an equal footing with other Americans in the purchase of liquor.

"We simply asked to be treated the same, with the privilege of any other American in going to a place where beer and liquor is sold legally and buying it." The delegation asked that the federal statute, based upon early Indian treaties, be amended. It would not provide Indians any more privilege than it did others, for they would be subject to laws involved against any one selling or introducing it upon a closed Indian Reservation.

The Tribal Council delegation believes that favorable recommendation to congress by the Bureau of Indian Affairs will have been the result of conferences.