

HOUSE AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK, AND IRRIGATION COMMITTEE

February 20, 1979

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Day at 8:00 a.m. with all members present except Representatives Bengtson, Brand, Hand, and Kanduch.

HOUSE BILL NO. 772

REPRESENTATIVE KATHLEEN MCBRIDE, Chief Sponsor, introduced the bill. She stated that this bill had been introduced last session. It will give the Indian tribes the right to bid and purchase state lands within the exterior boundaries of an Indian Reservation. The law now says that only individual Indians can purchase state lands.

PROPOSERS:

RANDY PEREZ, Fort Belknap Indian Community, stated that farming and ranching is their principal source of income on the reservation. Maximum use of the lands contained within the reservation is necessary to provide the land base necessary for an acceptable standard of living. They would like to be able to purchase the state lands within the reservation. (complete testimony attached)

JOE DEMONTINEY, Chippewa Cree Tribe, stated that they leased 14 hundred acres of state land on their reservation. They have many problems with trespassers. When they leased the land they have to develop it into good farm land. They would be willing to pay a fair market price if the tribes were allowed to purchase this land. These are good grazing lands now.

He concluded urging the committee to give this bill favorable consideration so they can have an opportunity to purchase these lands.

DELMAR BIGBEY, Fort Belknap Reservation, stated that they leased 19 thousand acres from the state. They pay rental on these lands and manage them the same as their own land. Their hope is that they will be able to purchase this land instead of paying rental.

Other proponents to HB 772 were, Paul Eagleman, Chippewa Cree Tribe, and Merle R. Lucas, Department of Community Affairs.

OPPOSERS:

MIKE STEPHEN, Montana Association of Counties, stated that they feel the Indians already have the opportunity to purchase state land. Any individual Indian can purchase these lands if they wish. The Department of State Lands is responsible for taking care of school lands and the childrens education. If these lands were bought they no longer would be responsible. Selling these lands to the tribes would render the land now taxable and the tax base would be lost.

WILLIAM F. BIGSPRING SR., Glacier County, stated that he did not believe

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in corporations buying land. He is bordered on three sides by 740 acres of state lands. He leases these lands for agricultural purposes. He did not think it would be a very good policy to let the tribes buy this land because then he would have alot of people around his land all the time. He stated that he felt an individual should purchase the land if anyone should. He would not be able to bid as much as the tribes could bid and they would get the land that he needed.

REPRESENTATIVE MCBRIDE closed by stating that right now an individual or a corporation are allowed to buy these lands but the tribes are not.

In conclusion she urged the committee's favorable consideration.

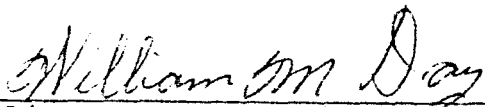
Questions were asked by the committee and the hearing on HB 772 was closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

HOUSE BILL NO. 772

Representative Jensen moved, DO NOT PASS. The motion was carried 10 to 4. Opposed: Johnson, Lien, Hirsch, Day

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

  
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William M. Day, Chairman

Judy J. Mook, Secretary