

Revolving Fund Increase Sought

The Department of the Interior has recommended that Congress increase to \$2 million the revolving fund that provides loans for expert assistance to Indian tribes that have filed claims before the Indian Claims Commission.

The Department has proposed an amendment to increase by \$1.1 million the present fund which was established under an Act of November 4, 1963. The fund now provides \$900,000 for loans to Indian tribes or groups that lack funds to secure expert services, other than counsel, in the preparation and trial of their claims.

As of March 1, 1966, the Department reported, loans totaling \$800,404 had been approved, and new loan applications totaling \$444,706 were pending against the \$99,596 bal-

ance available. An estimated 35 tribal groups that are expected to need similar financial assistance may apply for an additional \$1.5 million, the Department estimated, because the average loan is \$47,000.

Recognizing the revolving feature of the fund, Department spokesmen pointed out that a number of factors preclude sizable repayments on the outstanding loans for several years. Such repayments are usually made out of judgment funds.

Where Indian land title must be determined and the services of historians, anthropologists, and ethnologists required, the loans may be outstanding for an estimated five to seven years. When title has been determined, appraisals of land, minerals,

and timber may delay repayment from judgment funds for three to five years.

Progress of claims cases may be further delayed by the adverse actions of parties other than the petitioning Indians; by the need to dispose of issues on overlapping land interests; or by the appeal of Indian Claims Commission decisions to the Court of Claims.

The Department of the Interior believes that the proposed increase in the loan fund would expedite the settlement of pending claims.