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Judge hints at Indian Trust receivership**By The Daily Times**

WASHINGTON U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth has declared that he is seriously considering placing the troubled individual Indian trust in a receivership.

The judge made his comments during testimony Tuesday as he was presiding over a trial over how to resolve the severe problems he previously has found with the Interior Department's operation of trust. Established by Congress in 1887, the trust has handled billions of dollars in lease monies the government has arranged for Indian lands in the West.

After Paul Homan, a former special trustee for the Indian accounts, testified before Lamberth that the problem was so severe, that trust operation should be placed under a receiver, the judge disclosed he was seriously considering such a step.

"And, I'm going to look at the issue of, rather than a structural injunction, of a receiver, because, if I ultimately do not have the capacity to get the truth from the government, as I have found I don't, and if I don't have the capacity to have a court monitor or a special master, then I'm going to have to look at other methods in which I can deal with the government in this case, and obviously, the appointment of a receiver, as Mr. Homan is recommending, is one of those options I'm going to entertain. And I will tell the government right up front now so they can get whatever witnesses they want to have ready."

Later the judge referred to a Sept. 17 order in he which declined to appoint a receiver as the Indian plaintiffs in the nearly 7-year-old lawsuit over the trust accounts had requested.

"If my Sept. 17 opinion is out the window," the judge said Tuesday, "then I've got other options, I've got to look at."

Elouise Cobell, the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit and a member of the Blackfeet Nation, said the judge's order illustrates how serious the trust problems are.

"What Judge Lamberth is telling the government seems to be that a receivership may be the only way the cure the many, many problems he has discovered with the trust," she said. "It's shameful that this operation may have to be removed from the Interior Department.

"But they have had 116 years to resolve this problem. Today they still cannot tell Indians how much money should be in their accounts."

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"I hope Judge Lamberth moves quickly to help Indians get a full accounting of their money. They are among the poorest people in the nation and it is their money that has been lost since the inception of the trust."

If Lamberth places the trust under a receivership, it would be the first time a federal judge has placed part of the federal government under a receiver, according to Dennis Gingold, lead attorney for the Indians. Federal judges in Washington have placed departments of District of Columbia government under receivership after hearing that those departments were poorly run.

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