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Navajo Agency.

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Fruitland San Juan Co. New Mexico.
Dec 29th. 1891.

Hon. T. J. Morgan.
Commissioner of Indian affairs.
Washington D. C.

Sir — I take the liberty of asking you to devote a few moments of your valuable time to a few remarks and suggestions I wish to make in regard to this part of the Navajo Reservation, to which my work belongs;

Having had the past season's experience I think I can speak intelligently, in regard to some of the needs and things absolutely necessary to be done, in order to obtain lasting and beneficial results. I have called the Agent's attention to these matters, but whether he has recommended any action in the case, I know not. If he has, he has been kept in blissful ignorance of it. If there is to be any thing done, — and there certainly ought, — towards making this farming department a success, it is high time that there was a move made; Especially if we expect to derive any benefits from it the coming season.

I now become convinced that there cannot be but very little accomplished in learning these people to farm, in the backward way it has been carried on in the past. Here ought and must be some ~~systematic mode of procedure~~ some particular starting point. Where you can demonstrate, to the whole Tribe, what can be done in the farming line, by the success of the few we first start with. To accomplish this work, it becomes necessary for the government to provide the means whereby they can be assured of a supply of water sufficient for Irrigation purposes. This being accomplished, there will be no

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trouble to induce them to settle down, build themselves houses and surround them with such conveniences that it will be an inducement to stay there and quit the nomadic life they now lead, and which, in their present condition, is forced upon them from necessity.

As an experiment and to demonstrate this idea, there is no place on the Reservation, that I have seen, where it can be so easily and cheaply done, as here on the San Juan; nor do I know of a more productive soil, but it can never be utilized while these people occupy it unless the Government provides the means for irrigating it.

These people are not able, neither have they the tools and power necessary to take out a ditch to cover any great extent of country. They come in the spring and and occupy the little low bottoms along the river where they can take out a little ditch with shovels. These answer the purpose as long as the river is high, but later in the season as the river goes down many of them are left without water enough to mature the crop. Then another thing they have to contend with where the ditch is so close to the bank of the river is extra high water when it washes the whole ditch into the river, which has been the case three different times this last season with one of their ditches, and it took a week each time to repair it and depriving them of water when they were most in need of it.

The consequence was that they only raised about half a crop. They have demonstrated to me that they are good workers, even under very discouraging circumstances.

What we need and must have, to accomplish any progression in the farming line is some good ditches to cover these river valleys, and as a starting point and to demonstrate what can

done I would recommend that there be a ditch taken out, commencing at the N. E. corner of the reservation, Sect. 14 and take it around close to the bluff down to Sect. 14 Township 29 to the site of the proposed school building. Making a ditch some six or seven miles long and making tillable about 2400 acres of land, capable of supporting one hundred families; whereas at the present time it does not support ten

They would herd their flocks back on the mesa and use all of this valley for raising grain and other produce for their own subsistence as well as hay to feed their flocks in winter. There are two little pieces of alfalfa already in this valley and they see the advantage of it and are anxious to have more; They need all of their present available land to raise produce for their own subsistence.

If the school house is built on the location now intended, this ditch will be necessary for the use of the school farm. This ditch can be made at a comparatively small cost, as it can nearly all be made with plow and scraper Parties who claim to be posted, say it can be done for $3000. and some have estimated it at less than that. It can be done cheaper in the winter than any other time, on account of so many men and teams coming in here from the mountains, to winter

Having this ditch they would be assured of plenty of water and in a short time we could have a family on every twenty or twenty five acres, that would be covered with the ditch, (this amount of land I consider a plenty for one family at this time.)

Having this foundation laid, these people with the assistance of an energetic farmer could demonstrate to the whole

tribe the benefits and comforts to be derived from agricultural pursuits, and it would be an inducement for the others to provide themselves with the same surroundings. If this beginning should prove a success,— which I have no doubt would,— It would not be long until you could have the whole San Juan valley that belongs to the reservation under cultivation, which is enough to support the larger part of the Navajo Tribe.

Another advantage to be derived by improving this upper valley would be that there would be enough children in the immediate vicinity of the school building to fill it; and by having the parents living close by, you would avoid, to a certain extent, the objections you now meet with, where you have to take the children away from home, fifty or one hundred miles.

According to my observation, and the opinion of others who are in a position to know,— having had a knowledge of these people's circumstances for the last twelve years— these people are becoming poorer each year; their flocks are decreasing instead of increasing, and it seems only a question of short time when the government will have to help support them to avoid starvation; unless they put forth some little effort to provide the means whereby they can produce crops for their [illegible]. Another disadvantage these people have in this section is, that they are so far away from the agency,— over 100 miles and a range of mountains to cross,— that they get no benefit of the few agricultural tools that are issued. They have had a few plows given them at some time, but they haven't found one yet but that is so large, it would take the best Norman team in the state to handle it, so they are entirely useless for these little farmers. A harrow or cultivator are unknown among them.

An no doz plows

What I need and should have in order to accomplish any satisfactory results is at least; 12 – 8 inch cast-steel plows. 6. Harrows and 12 three tooth cultivators, also 18 long handled railroad shovels, and 24 planter hoes. These should be shipped to this place via Durango, Col. By shipping this way they can be laid down here as cheap or cheaper than they can be laid down at Fort Defiance; this saving the expense as well as the inconvenience of freighting them from Fort Defiance here.

Another thing that I need and for the benefit of these people and the work I am engaged in, seems almost indispensable, and that is an interpeter. Being so far from the Agency these people as well as the white settlers look to me for a settlement of all of their little difficulties. Not being able to carry on a conversation in the Navajo language it is impossible to act intelligently, thereby creating some dissatisfaction both with the whites and Indians. I have considerable complaint from the white people. I get their story and have to guess at the Indians' side of it. It is also necessary that I be able to inform them of the plan of our work and what the out come will be; this I am unable to do intelligently. The worst thing I have to contend with is the liquor traffic, with the assistance of an interpeter I might be able to trace some of it to its source. Although carried on quite extensively I have only been able to convict one man, and this we done about a week ago.

It seems to me that some of the scholars that have been returned from the Carlisle school and are now wandering around through the tribe with only a blanket on and nothing to do, might be hired at a small compensation, to fill the position, and while

it would be demonstrating to other Indians that an education is of some advantage. he could be the means of communicating to them a great amount of useful information, as well as earning something for his own support.

Should you consider this communication worthy of your consideration and desire farther information in regard to this subject I shall be glad to answer any questions, to the extent of my knowledge

I should like to know whether I may expect any assistance from the department in the way of the foregoing improvements suggested. in time to receive the benefits next season.

While here I should like to make a showing credidable to the department as well as to myself; But it is going to be a hard job under present circumstances.

Begging pardon if I have intruded to much on your time,

I am, Respectfully,

James Francis.

Add. Farmer, on San Juan