

REFER IN REPLY TO THE FOLLOWING:

L-A
48265-29
H V C

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON

Arsoner
Gutro
Hauke
Byron

File as
Oct. 28/29
OCT 24 1929

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Memorandum for the Secretary:

The attached letter from Mr. Floyd W. Lee, President of the New Mexico Wool Growers' Association, and the accompanying resolutions adopted by that association, was referred to me by your memorandum of October 4, 1929. The resolutions touch upon the following points relative to the land and stock matters of the Navajo Indians as they affect the tax payers of New Mexico:

That the withdrawal of lands from a taxable status when purchased by the United States for the use of the Indians is not fair to the taxpayers of New Mexico and Arizona.

That proper regulation of grazing within the Navajo Reservation and on lands now being purchased for them, would provide ample grazing for the stock of the Navajo Indians living both on and off the reservation.

That the policy of allotting Navajo Indians on the public domain results in the extensive use of such domain by the Indians with resultant overgrazing, and in trespass on privately owned lands and water privileges upon which taxes are paid to the State.

With regard to the first proposition, there seems to be some justice in the contention that it is unfair to purchase privately owned lands for the Indians and remove them from a taxable status. However, this is offset to a considerable extent, in my opinion, by the fact that large sums are spent annually by the Federal government in furnishing relief to the Navajo Indians along educational, health and industrial lines. In this way, the state and county are relieved of the expenditure of considerable moneys in extending educational and other forms of relief to the Navajos. Some consideration should also be given to the fact that the Navajo Indian is an asset to the community in which he lives because of his availability as a workman in various industries and as a spender of the proceeds received from his labor and the production of wool and other commodities.

CARBON FOR SECRETARY'S OFFICE

As to the second proposition, it is admitted that the grazing of sheep and cattle on the Navajo Reservations has not been regulated, up to this time, along approved lines of grazing conservation or good range practices. It has been impossible to do this because of the physical characteristics of the Navajo country, the large number of livestock owned by the Navajos, their nomadic habits and their inability to realize the value to them of complying with the restrictions necessary to range development and conservation. Great advancement, however, has been made in the work of teaching the Navajos along this line, and water development work has been carried on vigorously and continuously to the end that the greatest possible grazing area may be made available. Much progress has also been made in disposing of worthless stock and in the improvement of the breed of Indian sheep and cattle, so that the greatest possible return may be realized from the grazing resources, and plans are under way for range management along conservation lines.

With respect to the policy of allotting Navajo Indians on the public domain, it should be sufficient in my opinion to say in justification, that it is only giving individual Indians, who are properly qualified, a right to acquire possession and ownership of an individual tract of land on which he has in many cases, occupied and improved or used for a beneficial purpose for a number of years. In this way, to some extent at least, he is placed on an equal basis with the white citizen who is permitted under the public land laws to acquire public land for a homestead. Nearly all the Navajo Indians living off the reservation are living within the territory embraced in the Santa Fe land grant; that is, within a strip 80 miles wide through which runs the Santa Fe Pacific Railroad. In this strip every alternate section is now or was at one time the property of the railroad company, and all of it, however owned, now comes under the head of privately owned lands. This leaves every other alternate section as public domain land, except such as has been disposed of to homesteaders or allotted to Indians under the fourth section of the General Allotment Act.

Viewing the situation, from all angles presented, it is my belief that we are following a policy which is thoroughly justified, in our efforts of extending relief to the Navajo Indians, both on and off the reservations and especially with respect to the purchase of additional lands where needed by the Indians (from their own tribal funds) and in assisting them to acquire title to individual tracts on the public domain, for which they will eventually receive 85-year trust patents, and ultimately when they have had a sufficient business experience to manage their own affairs without Government supervision, they will receive final or fee patents. When they reach this stage they will, of course, become tax payers. So far as our records disclose, the Navajos on the public domain are utilizing all of their lands and none are being leased to outsiders.

Commissioner.