

Mr. Fred Nora,
4154 Wentworth Avenue,
Minneapolis 8, Minnesota.

SEP 28 1945

My dear Mr. Nora:

The problem of the Hopis to which you refer in your postcard of June 10 has been of deep concern to the Indian Office for more than sixty years. It is still one of the pressing and urgent problems confronting this Service.

At the base of this problem lies the ugly fact that the land base available for the support of the Hopis and of the Navajos is far too small to enable these Indian tribes to make even a bare subsistence livelihood. Sixty years ago some two and a half million acres were set aside by action of the President for two thousand Hopis and for such other Indians as the Secretary of the Interior might allow to use the area. This latter phrase was used because even at that time hundreds of Navajo families were maintaining their homes and running their sheep within this so-called "Moqui" Reservation. The two thousand Hopis then used the table land and the area adjacent to this table land for their remarkable agricultural operations and they ran limited numbers of cattle and sheep on the range which they shared with the Navajos. Since that time the Hopis have increased to 3,200, erosion has diminished the amount of agricultural land they can successfully use and overgrazing has also reduced the productive capacity of the range available to them.

During the same period the number of Navajos, within and without the Hopi Reservation, which as you know is entirely surrounded by the Navajo Reservation, increased from 11,000 in 1868 to more than 50,000 in 1943. This increase in the Navajo population was especially marked in certain areas contiguous to the Hopi Reservation. As a result of the pressure of the increasing Navajo population upon its shrinking available resources of soil, water and grass, the number of Navajos going from their congested areas into the Hopi Reservation increased from year to year and intense competition developed between the Hopi stockmen and the Navajo stockmen, just as on the public domain the unregulated competition for grass between the users developed constant conflicts which the Government endeavored to settle through the operation of the Taylor Grazing Act.

On the Hopi Reservation the competition for the limited amount of range between Hopis and Navajos has become fiercer and more bitter as both tribes increased in population without a corresponding increase in the land base available to them.

It has been the aim of this Office to check, if possible, additional encroachments by the more aggressive Navajos upon the Hopi range. Under the wording of the Executive Order establishing the "Moqui" Reservation, the Navajos were granted certain use rights, the extent of which in their relation to the Hopi rights has never been defined. Construction of the drift fence at the

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request of the Hopi stockmen operating in the affected area was undertaken primarily for the protection of these Hopi stockmen against further Navajo encroachments and to make possible better range management and improve the animal husbandry practices. There was no thought of establishing a boundary for the Hopi Reservation. There could be no establishment of a new boundary for this reservation by this Office as its boundaries had been fixed in the Presidential Order establishing the reservation sixty years ago. Only Congress can alter the existing boundary.

The Hopis would like to have the use of the two and a half million acres of the "Moqui" Reservation. I sympathize with their desire and wish it were possible to help them obtain this land. This would involve at the least the removal of all of the Navajos from the "Moqui" Reservation. What should we do with the displaced Navajos? There are several thousand of them. The Navajo Reservation proper is already seriously overcrowded. The Hopi problem cannot be solved without also simultaneously solving the problem of the Navajos. A partial solution of the problem of both tribes lies in the provision of additional irrigated land on a very large scale. A beginning has been made so far as the Hopis are concerned by providing irrigated land on the Colorado River Reservation and fifteen Hopi families have already moved to very productive irrigated land there. We hope eventually to have enough of this Colorado River irrigated land for several hundred Hopi and Navajo families. We are also endeavoring to obtain authority and funds for irrigating and developing from the waters of the San Juan River and its tributaries a very large acreage on the Navajo Reservation. If our effort in this direction is successful the pressure on the resources of both tribes should be greatly reduced, although the rapid increase in the number of both tribes may prevent a complete solution of the problem through this manner.

The allegations against Superintendent Ladd are being given careful consideration.

The delay in answering your card has been caused by my absence in Alaska. I expected to go to Hopi but that was impossible. I hope that I shall be able to get there before the year ends.

I hope that your interest in the welfare of the Hopis will continue and you may rest assured that this Office will do its best to meet their desires, within the limitations placed upon us by legal, physical and economic considerations.

cc - Forestry
McNickle
WVW:ns
8-18/9-19-45

Sincerely yours,

(Signature)
Commissioner.