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Our 'Mother' — a complex problem

Well, the preliminaries are underway — Tuesday night the Hopi Tribal Council Chairman held his pow wow for the Third Mesa residents at the community center in Kyakotsmovi. Vice Chairman Alvin Dashee, and BIA Superintendent Alph Secakuku held forth at Polacca at the same time.

These meetings, of course, are preliminaries to the big one scheduled to come off this coming Saturday, October 30. Wednesday night the chairman will be in Phoenix to meet with Hopis down there who requested the meeting. Thursday night, meetings are scheduled in Moenkopi and Second Mesa. As predicted, the various forces are drawn along factional lines with the middle group consisting of mostly young people struggling to gain a foothold on one side or the other.

The issue, as many have said, is very complex, and one complaint which we consider is legitimate is that we need more time to understand the issue before we can take intelligent action on it. There is only a small chance that we may gain the needed extra time as we have been informed, but there is a greater risk if we don't obtain the extra time.

Also predictably, many of the people, particularly the "so-called traditionalists" are saying that they will never consent to selling our Mother (our land) for any amount of money. But then, that is the general feeling among all the people.

However, the big problem is that, unless we accept the negotiated cash settlement, we may greatly lessen our chances to recover any of the aboriginal land.

And that is what the meetings are all about — to explain to the Hopi people why accepting the $5,000,000 would enable us to pursue the recovery of our ancient land.

We've attempted to explain the issue in our column, and people who are better able to do that are doing it, so we will confine our discussion to the reaction that is evident so far from the Hopi people.

The first reaction, of course, is confusion. Then following that comes anger, then a political reaction and finally some understanding.

The usual reaction is, "Why didn't the Tribal Council do this or that," or "Why did they let so-and-so do this or that to them?"

We agree that our Tribal Council has its shortcomings. But in matters of this importance, any government can not solely be blamed (in our form of government) because theoretically, they are supposed to be working for the interest of the people at their direction.

So blaming one another for circumstances and negative developments in the progress of our Hopi nation is beneath the intellectual level of thinking and actions that are required to solve problems of this magnitude.

And, since political opposition is not against the law, it is also there to be contended with. So, while many of us are really trying to understand the problem, there are others who are using the issue merely to make political hay.

Interspersed in and among all the different reactions are genuine expressions of convictions which we hope enough people will recognize so that when and if decisions are made this coming Saturday, these decisions will really reflect the concerns of the Hopi people.

Before anyone can express any kind of concern at all on the matter, he has first to understand it. From our own experience in trying to explain the issue; and by observation of others' efforts, it is plain to see that there is a lot to do in this area so it would be wisdom in us to spend the limited time we have to help each other understand what the problem is and not use the time up in factional fighting.

Many Hopis have no conception of government and the mysteries of the legal system. This is a burden to be borne by all our present and future leaders until the people become enlightened in these matters. This situation has had its effects on all the deliberations and actions of our Tribal government since its inception. It will affect the deliberations of next Saturday's meeting.

People usually fear what they don't understand — so there is another reason why our Tribal government is struggling along almost without the help of people whom it governs.

Suffice it to say that all these psychological factors are working to affect the decisions to be made on Saturday.

There is one area of concern we have over this whole issue that we wish to emphasize again. That is that we would like to see our young people — young families get directly involved.

We, your elders, who are telling you how much we know about these things, such as life, religion, ethics and land, are also showing you by example that we refuse to accept the responsibility for the sad state of affairs in our land.

We blame you for drunkeness, immorality and all manner of ills that now beset your generation.

We have conveniently forgotten that it is our responsibility as uncles, fathers and grandparents to teach you the strengths of our Hopi way of life.

We preach to you all manner of beautiful things but you can see by how we act and live that we don't follow our own teachings.

We, your elders, find ourselves in "Grandpa David's" (Monongye of Hotevilla) shoes. We have a beautiful song, but we have lost our credibility. No one wants to believe us anymore, much less respect us.

But you still have one thing — the land, or what's left of it. You will be next responsible for it, even though we your elders have left you a mess. If you could find the strength and courage to go after all the land the Hopi claims, you could be rewarded, but not if you sit around and quarrel over it as we did.

The land was pulled out from under us and given to others while we your elders argued about who had the biggest *mong-koho* (Chief stick).

Don't let that happen to you. Get to the meeting on Saturday and get involved.

EXHIBIT 131