Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall announced the signing of a contract today between the Western Superior Corporation, a subsidiary of the BVD Co., Inc. and the Hopi Tribal Council for the establishment of a new $1.5 million garment manufacturing plant on the outskirts of Winslow, Ariz. The nationally known organization will be located on a 200-acre area site donated to the Hopi Indian tribe by the town of Winslow.

The factory will be built by the Hopis to BVD specifications and leased back to its subsidiary. It will take in two acres under roof, with 107-thousand square feet of working area. The Santa Fe Railroad and Highway 66 parallel the tract.

It is anticipated that as many as 800 Indians will eventually be employed by the firm in the main plant and other smaller plants on the reservation which will feed into the operation at Winslow. The organization will be highly diversified in its operation, including cutting and sewing, knitting, dying and bleaching, and packaging, warehousing and shipping of a variety of soft goods items. The enterprise is part of the company's western expansion plans.

The signing brings to culmination almost two years of a series of negotiations between representatives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs who made the initial contact with BVD, the corporation, and the town of Winslow, and the two Indian tribes of the area -- the Hopis and the Navajos. The Winslow site was originally offered to the Navajos, but the Tribal Council turned it down.

Although never looked upon, traditionally, as a commercial minded people, it was the Hopis who stepped in with their own proposal to finance the venture with funds from their oil lease bonus. It is the largest single investment to date made by an Indian tribe with an outside firm.

"At a time when the Bureau of Indian Affairs has brought together some of the country's leading industrialists to acquaint them with the possibilities and rewards of building on or near Indian reservations, the tribes should take every possible step to encourage enterprises that will provide employment for their people," Secretary Udall said. "This is part of what we mean when we talk about handing over the reins of freedom to the Indian people."

He continued: "The Hopis seemed to understand immediately that more than a plant was needed; that housing and other community services that Winslow could 0ffer were equally important to an operation of this size. It is gratifying to witness their quick response to this tremendous opportunity."

The Secretary also praised the Hopi Council for its generosity in making it a condition of their contract that Navajos as well as Hopis were to get hiring preference. Sixty Navajo girls who have already been trained in a pilot project by BVD at Winslow will probably be the first employees when the new plant is built.

"This is the kind of forward thinking among Indians that we want to encourage in future negotiations for the tribes," Secretary Udall said. "The Hopis have told me that they see the new plant as a foretaste

of the future. Now their children will find employment near the reservation and will not need to move far from the area to take advantage of the education that thousands of them are getting through BIA education programs. The BVD Corporation anticipates a full training program to install Indians on the supervisory and management levels, the entire operation eventually to be all-Indians.

“Among those present at the signing in ,the Secretary's office of the Department of the Interior was Harry Isaacs, Senior Vice President of BVD; the Hopi's tribal attorney, John S. Boyden; members of the Hopi Tribal Council; Dewey Healing, chairman, Homer Cooyama, Robert Sakiestewa and Clifford Honahni; Mayor J. Lester Allen of Winslow and Harold Elmer, director of the town's Industrial Development Commission; as well as Deputy Commission Theodore W. Taylor and other Bureau of Indian Affairs officials.