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In remarks at the dedication of Block I of the Navajo Irrigation Project in Farmington, New Mexico, today Secretary of the Interior Thomas S. Kleppe hailed the opportunities the project will provide for the Indian people.

"In the past," Secretary Kleppe said, "too many Navajos have been faced with what to them have been unsatisfactory alternatives. They could stay on the tribal land with little hope for more than an economically marginal existence. Or they could seek employment in the urban areas where the style of living too often was incompatible with the values they learned here.

"This project will make it possible for many thousands of Navajos to have the best of both worlds: they can live on the land they love and have the opportunity to work on jobs which are economically rewarding to them and productive for the tribe and for our Nation."

The project was described by the Secretary as the largest Indian reclamation project since the Hohokams - the ancient Indians who more than 2,000 years ago developed an extensive irrigation system in central Arizona.

"This project is a monument to a richer, better life for the Navajo people," he said. "For hundreds of years to come, the work of all the people who labored here will stand as evidence of your ability and your dedication to a better life for your people."

With cooperative efforts such as the Navajo Project, Secretary Kleppe said, the Indian community is going to experience unparalleled progress and achievement. "There will be great accomplishments," he emphasized, "because competent effective Indian leaders are seizing the opportunity to be strong leaders. Indian self-determination is a policy that is working, and this project is concrete proof of the great progress that has been made."