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Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay today approved a series of recommendations Lade by a Survey Team which has been studying the organization and operations of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The Team, which was appointed on October 6, 1953 was made up of Walter Bimson, Phoenix, Ariz., chairman; Robert D, Lutton, Santa Fe Railroad, Chicago, J. R. Johns, Sears Roe buck, Co., Dallas, Texas. Mr. Bimon is chairman of the board, Valley National Bank of Phoenix. George W. Abbott, counsel of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, and three officials of the Department participated in the survey.

The Survey Team began its study in Washington on October 12 and from October 16 to November 16 visited all Bureau area offices except Alaska.

The recommendations are of great practical value, Secretary McKay said, and will provide the Department with better tools to handle important Indian affairs more efficiently on the national level.

Major recommendations made by the Team pertain to organization problems of the Bureau. These recommendations include:

Continuation of the Area Office form of organization, which is basically sound.

Consolidation of the Window Rock Area Office and the Albuquerque Area Office at Albuquerque, N. Mex. The affairs of the Navajos would continue to be administered by the superintendent at Window Rock.

Consolidation of two area offices in Oklahoma now at Muskogee and Anadarko and the establishment of one office at a central point in the State.

Consolidation at all levels of the branches of soil conservation, extension and irrigation and range management activities now in the branch of forestry and range management into a new branch of land operations.

Reduction of the number of staff technicians at area offices.

Transfer of the branch of credit from the Division of Resources to Division of Administration.

Abolition of the branch of management planning in the Division of Administration and the establishment of an Office of Management Research in the Commissioner’s Office, to include reports control, statistics and information.

Special emphasis was placed by the Survey Team on two of the Bureau’s activities:

1. There is a tremendous backlog of land transactions which must be eliminated before any real progress can be made in meeting the over-all objectives of the Bureau. Increased funds for this

purpose are urgently recommended.
2. The progress of voluntary and permanent relocation of Indians off reservations should be expanded. The Team considers this one of the most constructive and promising aspects of the Bureau's program.

Other important recommendations, dealing with functional matters, include the following:

Further construction of relatively high-cost boarding schools on the Navajo Reservation should be postponed. The Bureau should concentrate on providing inexpensive facilities of a semi-permanent nature that would increase the number of children in day schools in a comparatively short time.

The Bureau should develop a program, with the cooperation of Congress and the Bureau of the Budget to accomplish early disposition of the backlog of cases involving probate administration of Indian trust property.

Other recommendations dealing with functional changes relate to the maintenance and construction of roads; marketing of mature, overripe and infested timber; standards of eligibility for health, education and welfare services; elimination of reports and the development of an aggressive, well-coordinated public relations program.

In transmitting the recommendations to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Secretary McKay set February 15 for the initiation of several of the major recommendations. These include the realignment of the branch organization and consolidation, organization, staffing and location of area offices. The Commissioner was also instructed to submit definite proposals for attacking the other major problems delineated by the Survey Team, within 90 days.

The Team pointed out that many of the recommendations provide the Bureau with an opportunity to make substantial savings or to give greater service with no increase in cost.

This would be accomplished through consolidation of several branches in Washington and in each of the area offices in which a number of supervisory positions could be eliminated.

Consolidation of the Window Rock and Albuquerque Area Offices, the Team stated, would eliminate a substantial number of positions in the two offices and a similar saving could be expected in the consolidation of Muskogee and Anadarko Area Offices in Oklahoma. Recommendations to merge the Building and Utilities Branch located in Washington with that activity at Gallup, N. Mex., and a new approach to the work being done by this branch would likewise result in substantial economies.

An effort to place many activities on a more self-sustaining basis is stressed in the recommendations. In this field, increased foes would be charged for special services rendered of direct personal benefit such as in oil and gas leasing and other land transactions, the probating of estates, medical care for other than indigents, and for the supply of irrigation water.

Other recommendations when adopted would result in greater returns from funds now being expended, the Team pointed out. For instance, greater numbers of Navajo children could attend school if facilities are constructed which would cost $600 instead of $6,000 per child as at present. The recommended transfer of various functional activities, such as bringing roads up to acceptable standard for transfer to counties and the transfer of extension activities to State Extension Services would result in substantial savings. The Team paid high tribute to Bureau employees who evidence a high degree of interest and

personal devotion to their jobs.

Tracing the 129-year history of the Bureau, from its establishment in 1824, the Team declared that the Bureau’s responsibilities and -programs have varied in content and emphasis with such frequency that a continuity of organization and operating procedures has been difficult. Unlike any other activity of the Federal Government, the responsibilities of the Bureau are determined not, only by acts of Congress but by treaty and moral obligations as well.

The Bureau at the present time has a total of 10,805 full-time employees and 2,348 other employees, on a temporary, seasonal or part-time basis. 55 percent of the employees are Indians, and approximately 726 employees are paid by tribal funds.

Total appropriations from Treasury funds for the Bureau Is operations this fiscal year total $284,122,760, which is less than its highest appropriation. 24 percent, or $21,082,334, was specifically earmarked for the Navajo-Hopi area.

In discussing the recommendation for the Window Rock-Albuquerque consolidation, the Team stated "the assignment of one man to the dual role of area director and superintendent is unsound, and practically results in too great a load for one man to carry in view of the inherent difficulties and size of the operation.

Heretofore subordination of the Hopi Reservation to an area director who was also superintendent of the Navajos has produced friction between the tribes. This situation will be corrected by the reorganization.

Adequate housing and offices are available in Albuquerque and that office at present has a relatively light workload and is near enough to all the reservations to facilitate communication. Gallup was considered as the location of the combined area office but was not selected primarily because of shortages of housing and office space and because of a limited supply of office workers. However, the Team recommended that the headquarters of the Buildings and Utilities Branch of the Bureau be located in Gallup. The Team also recommended reestablishment of the superintendency of the United Pueblos agency in New Mexico, distinct from the area director at Albuquerque.

Practically the same reasons are given for recommending consolidation of the two Area Offices in Oklahoma and the location of one office in the central part of the State. The consolidation of administrative and other functions would result in savings which would more than offset the increased cost of reestablishing the two superintendent's positions.