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Deering

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Nome, Alaska, Aug. 29, 1914

The Commissioner of Education,

Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir :

On August the fifth, in company with Mr. Chas. Repleg, the teacher at Deering, I visited the site on the lower Kobuk selected by the Deering natives for their new village. Although the matter has been covered before I will outline briefly the reasons for wishing to move the Deering village, and the reasons for selecting this particular site.

The reasons group themselves into two sets, the those concerning the natives at Deering, and the reasons concerning the natives on the lower Kobuk. I will take up the Deering reasons first.

One. Deering is not a good site for a village by nature. It is a long way to the sealing grounds. It is a long way to good drinking water. The drift does not throw any wood on the shore near Deering. Never enough to keep the people warm. As a result they have been burning green willows and alders, few of which are as thick as a mans wrist. These willows and alders, being of very slow growth, are now practically gone. Last winter the village could barely keep warm.

Two. As a result of the development of mining and the number of white prospectors, the game of the country has been killed

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off and driven off. It therefore has become increasingly difficult for the natives to secure rabbits and ptarmigan for food, and almost impossible to make a living from trapping.

Three. For the above reasons there is no future for the Deering people at their present home. They are very anxious to get ahead and they know they cannot where they are.

The reasons that ~~th~~ make this move advisable for the sake of the natives on the Kobuk can be stated very briefly.

For at least five years we have recognized the need of a school on the lower Kobuk. Last winter I got records of seventy odd children needing school from Kiama down to the mouth of the river. With the funds as they are at present it is impossible to establish a new school on the proper footing. But it is possible to move another school to them and thus make one school plant meet the needs of two peoples. Without the Deering people it would be very difficult to get the natives on the Kobuk to come together as each little village wants its own site selected for the school. The white people have done all they could to keep the natives excited over the new school and in every way the situation has been difficult until the Deering people decided to move. Now we have a stable body of natives, under good leadership, ready to start a village. The Kobuk natives are bound to come together at this place

The site that has been selected is the very best one I have seen on the lower Kobuk. Last winter I saw the different proposed sites between Kiama and Akeik and none of them equal this one. The village can be set up on a high back where the drainage will

will be good. There is plenty of good timber all around. The river teems with fish winter and summer and the hills are full of game.

In addition to all these natural advantages, within this whole tract, as far as known, there is not a white man living. As far as I can see there can be no contest on the rights to the ground. This would not be the case anywhere above Aksik, and any place in that section would keep the natives near the white village of Kiana.

It is the intention, as fast as the Bureau funds will permit, to make this a big industrial center for the entire Kotzebue Sound country. This can easily be done as it is the central point for the entire country. It will mean a great deal to have moved an Eskimo village from a barren piece of coast to a timbered country. They can still send men down to the coast to hunt for seal as in the past. They will be able to build real houses and will be able to keep warm and do proper cooking. We have felt that the lack of wood for building material and fuel has been the greatest drawback for the advancement of the Eskimos. The fact that the village will move in a body will mean that they will soon do everything in a body which will mean success and advancement for the whole village. In every way we consider this the biggest move that has been made in connection with the natives for a long time, in this part of Alaska.

To make this a success it is absolutely necessary that the Bureau give its own strength to the matter. We must have this section reserved by Executive Order. And the sooner the better. With this end in view we have put down a stake, with

a location notice, and have claimed, in the name of the Bureau of Education, a tract fifteen miles square. This matter should be taken up at once and steps taken to have it set aside. Of course it will have to be surveyed, I hope that can be done this next summer. It is absolutely vital that it be done.

We have taken up fifteen miles because we want to have all the timber that we can get in, and in addition we want to have such a large tract so that white men can be kept a long way from the village. From my point of view this is not to keep out the whiskey peddler etc. for there is comparatively little of the that in this district, and where it exists it is due to lack of the right kind of ^{influence} ~~work~~ on the part of those in charge. But it is to keep out the trader. The success of this move will lie chiefly in our plan to establish native stores and native industries. At present the traders in Kotzebue Sound own the whole country. When this village is ^{settled} ~~going~~ they will own a very small part of it.

I feel quite sure that the traders will fight this move and this reservation as hard as they can. They must as it is self preservation with them. However, if we are to do anything for these natives it is our duty to put them on their feet along economic lines even if it "takes the bread out of the mouths" of the traders. If we are not going to do this we had better quit. I do not know in what way the traders will fight this move but I fully expect this. We have not gone into the matter without thinking it out and are convinced it is the best move. Therefore any objection that may be made to the Department by outside parties should not be given too much weight until the matter can be replied to by us.

All through this section at present there is

great interest taken by the natives in church matters. This is due largely to the presence of two, somewhat conflicting, religious denominations, with the possibility of a third. There is much that could be said of this. After studying this side of the native work for a few years, as it concerns this section, I wish to express the hope that we may be able to manage this new village and reservation strictly as a Government matter without taking in any mission-partner, as it were. At least for a year. To strengthen this position I might add that Mr. Heplogle has been for years connected with the Friends church, although not ^{now} connected with their Mission board, and possibly not completely in sympathy with its policies. He is just the man to give the native religious teaching, and he is not the man to neglect it. I do not want to go into this matter in detail, but if in the opinion of the Bureau, a regular mission of either Denomination at present in that country should be allowed to enter this reservation from the beginning, then I would request that ~~it~~ be called upon to present a special report on the religious situation in this part of Alaska. I do not care to do so unless it is necessary for me to ^{attempt to} carry this point by means of such a report. In no way is this new village to be in competition with any church work. As a matter of fact wherever the Government does real work up here there is not a ghost of competition. But I mean that no one can consider that this new village under Mr. Heplogles leadership will in any way harm any of the denominational work now being done in that country.

It is hoped that this new village will in the course of time be the home of all the natives on the Kobuk below Kiana. From Kiana up we expect the people to go to Shungnak which

place has great agricultural possibilities. There will be much interest taken by the natives of other villages and for a while it will be necessary to prevent them from moving from established villages. Of course it is not our intention to allow this new village to draw from such villages.

In this connection I wish to state that this move is the result of Mr. Hopley's work with the Deering people. I have found him to be a large caliber man and just the man to take charge of this large proposition. He should receive much credit for this move.

I enclose a description of the tract, also some pictures taken there. I would recommend and urge that steps be taken immediately to have this tract surveyed and set aside. Any action that is taken I would appreciate immediate notification of by wire.

It is the plan to make the move next summer. But most of the natives will go over in March to prepare the ground

Very respectfully,

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Superintendent, N.W. District.