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MOTHER EARTH, FATHER SKY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: NAVAJO RESOURCES AND THEIR USE.

By PHILIP RENO

Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1981. Pp. 183.

Dr. Reno's short study of Navajo economic development unfortunately fails to be of much use to any of the entities touted on the dust jacket: Navajo educators, students, tribal policymakers, thinkers, and leaders, because it fails to address the fundamental paradox in Indian economic development—tribal self-government and the federal trusteeship. He has documented facts that are well known, the poor rate of return on mineral leases, the history of Navajo sheep, and the traditional weaknesses of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. However, these facts are not used to suggest a solution to the basic paradox.

Too often, the facts of the economic rape of the Navajo are raised as examples of the exploitation of Indians without asking who should bear the burden of guilt for the underlying agreements. The book assumes that the federal government, particularly the Bureau of Indian Affairs, is the culprit. In one sense, this is correct because the Bureau should not have approved some of the contracts extant but rather ought to have acted against the wishes of the tribe and simply said "no," despite tribal ownership of resources and right of exercise of self-government.

Dr. Reno fails to take into account the responsibility of the tribal leadership to negotiate contracts that would guarantee a fair rate of return. The Navajo-Exxon joint venture agreement is an excellent example of this. He quotes a "mineral consultant" who "... never could understand why a tribe cannot consider obtaining equity shares without cash payment . . ." (p. 139), and leaves this hanging as part of the general criticism of the joint venture, but never answers the question. A tribe can consider and in fact get the equity shares; the real question is not why they cannot consider it, but why the tribal leadership and the tribal attorneys did not negotiate that type of agreement.

The most unfortunate aspect of Dr. Reno's book is that it gives the impression of addressing the very serious issue of Indian economic development but does not. The history of Indian policy has often been the case of the appearance of solution, without solution. A serious book on Indian economic development needs to be written, one which will provide explicit guidelines for development rather than re-

hashing past mistakes. This, as yet unwritten, book should examine the issue from the perspective of the unique position of the Indian tribes, and not turn to the often used but seldom useful analogy of the Third World.

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