

ble of mass killing, as the London train bombings last summer showed, but the threat they represent is very different from that of Stalin's Soviet Union or Hitler's Germany.

Letters to the Editor

Weed Cutting

Dear Editor,
Having been forced to cut and remove the weeds on business property I lease on Highway 66 under threat of a citation from the City Fire Department, I find it interesting that a lot on the south side of Coal at the west "Y" as well as the railroad property east of the train station are permitted to have significantly more uncut weeds than I had.

I can only assume that it is once more a case of "who you are" and very little to do with City ordinances or beautification.

M.L. Pyles,
Gallup

Senior problems

Dear Editor,
The excellent and thorough article by Mr. Zsombor Peter pertaining to the woes and problems of senior citizens was most impressive. The previous director of senior citizens and I had discussed at length concerning a halfway house or transitional living quarters for senior citizens. That is for those not needing to be in a Nursing home but needing some place to keep warm and dry.

Currently, that place is the old Shalmar Inn, which rather than tearing it down, donate it to the senior citizens. Mr. Rashid, owner, at the Shalmar could use it as a tax deductible enterprise and with current price of land and a building in Gallup, it must be worth millions of dollars.

Of course, the entire project must be approved by the administration as it is their responsibility. This would eliminate the need for a sensibility study thus, saving one fifth of a million dollars. The money saved could be used for renovation purposes.

The drafting department at UNM Gallup could be used as the architect, saving more dollars and could be used as a learning program. The instructor with his students could approach the building; look it over with his class, produce a mock-up of the bid including a dining area and kitchen and recreation

area on the first floor with living quarters or a transitional living area on the second floor and third floor. Utilize the local students as trade industry are taught at the college block carpentry, welding, electricity and construction courses.

Necessary renovations at the rooms could be accomplished by the students and change of the electrical could be done with the supervised of the instructor thus, passing inspection.

The students could be graded accordingly by the instructor. Practicality is the mother of learning!! If anybody reading this article has any other ideas or experiences, please send them to Mr. Zsombor Peter or the Independent.

Wiley Hedrick
Gallup

Indian Trust Mgmt

Dear Editor,
A recent article in your newspaper by Steve Lawrence about the long-running *Cobell v. Kempthorne* Indian trust lawsuit was full of misleading mistakes. Certainly history has not been kind to American Indians and many unfortunate policies were implemented throughout the last two centuries, but it is harmful to Indian trust beneficiaries themselves to spread false information.

To set the record straight, in 1994 Congress passed the American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act (Reform Act). The Reform Act included some simple language requiring Interior to do an accounting of Indian trust funds. Two years later, the *Cobell* case was filed to compel Interior to execute this historical trust accounting. The case brought a lot of attention to an important subject, and, on the heels of the Reform Act, raised many issues about the federal government's management of the Indian trust. Since that time, Interior has made tremendous improvements for the benefit of all account holders.

For the first time in history, Interior has hired skilled fiduciary trust officers across Indian Country to work directly with Indian trust account holders and trust beneficiaries

can call a toll free information center where staff will help them receive answers to their trust questions (1-888-678-6836). Systems by which trust funds get collected, deposited and distributed are being improved across the country. To ensure accountability to beneficiaries, Interior reconciles cash receipts on a daily basis, and financial assets on a monthly basis. Our accounting system is the same as one in major private trust corporations, and is audited every year. Today, we have one of the best archival records and already have more than 300 million pages stored there for use by all future generations. There is a lot of work left to do, but things are entirely different today from how they were even a decade ago.

In his story, Lawrence mentions an Indian trust beneficiary who has oil wells pumping on his land but receives only \$30 a month. Most people think this means Interior is cheating the beneficiary, but in fact, this unfortunate circumstances almost always is the result of trust land "fractionation." In other words, because of early probate codes, trust land often gets divided time and again as it is passed down through generations. Today, there are small parcels of trust land that are owned by hundreds or even thousands of people. If you have a parcel of trust land that is bringing in \$1,000 a month, but there are 100 owners, each may receive a very small amount. Fractionation is the biggest problem in the Indian trust today, and many people are working to find solutions.

We agree, with opinion writers, plaintiffs, and Congress that it is time to bring the *Cobell* litigation to closure. Indian country has serious problems that need to be addressed. Poverty is rampant, education can be sub par; health care statistics are staggeringly sad. The department is spending upwards of \$65 million per year on the litigation that could be redirected into other Indian programs. We need to return to our core mission of serving Indian communities instead of dedicating limited resources to respond to court orders.

The good people who work in Indian Affairs — the majority of whom are American Indian — are making great strides to reform the Indian trust for the benefit of all beneficiaries. These are the facts.

Ross O. Swimmer
Special Trustee for American Indians
US Department of the Interior

Farrakhan

Dear Editor,
"Valley of Decisions"
We, the people of the Navajo Nation, are once again at the crossroads of yet another major decision point in life. As new or incumbent candidates are running for office, let us be reminded that whatever decisions are made will ultimately affect the future generations.

One of the most significant points, lies with who we allow to dictate to us about our tribe. Such as, the leader of the Nation of Islam, Louis Farrakhan, who has ties to Mumamar Khadafy, the dictator of Lybia. These two individuals who had publicly

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The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

-Isaiah 35:1