

The CHAIRMAN. We will give each witness 5 minutes. You may proceed, Mr. Abeita. Glad to have you come up.

STATEMENT OF JUAN B. ABEITA, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ISLETA PUEBLO

Mr. ABEITA. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, in anticipation that a question might be raised concerning religious freedom in the Pueblo of Isleta, we have prepared the following brief statement concerning the controversy of June 1956. Monsignor Stadtmueller, the Isleta parish priest was forcibly evicted from the Pueblo because of continued involvement in Pueblo civil affairs. It is a matter of record that he actively fostered causes within the Pueblo membership which sought to destroy the Pueblo government. This included denunciation and ridicule of our customs and traditions. It is well known that he stated that he would refuse the holy sacraments of the Church to members who participated in the traditional practices of the Pueblo. For this reason, the archbishop was requested on several occasions over a period of several years to transfer the monsignor. When he repeatedly failed to cooperate in this request, action forcing eviction was taken.

However, at no time did the Pueblo officials ever make any effort to close the doors of the church and the archbishop was advised that the church facilities would not be interfered with, but would be available for services by any church official other than Monsignor Stadtmueller. It was the archbishop, who in fact ordered the door of the church locked.

It should further be noted that at no time have our Pueblo officials denied any member of the Pueblo the right of freedom of choice of religion. We have never denied any member access to the Roman Catholic Church on the Pueblo lands or to any other church of his choice. This is further evidenced by the fact of the existence of other faiths within the Pueblo, some of whom also have church facilities located on Pueblo lands.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I understand from your statement that the regular parishioners of the Roman Catholic Church were being denied the right of sacraments that goes along with worship in the church simply because of the fact that they still held to some of their original customs and beliefs; is that correct?

Mr. ABEITA. Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Washington?

Mr. MEEDS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Did the judges actually uphold, the judges of the tribal, the legal system, actually uphold the right of the priest to be there?

Mr. ABEITA. Now, if I may, I have a resolution prior to the eviction of the—I mean prior to the incarceration of the judges which was passed on by the Council of the Isleta Pueblo authorizing the Governor sole authority to negotiate with the Archbishop of Santa Fe to come to some solution of this religious problem, and be recognized that the Governor of Isleta Pueblo has the authority to enforce whatever agreements be reached with the Archbishop of Santa Fe. This