

Indians." The permit of October 24, 1940, issued under that act provided that "persons not members of the Pueblo of Taos, other than forest officers, shall be admitted into this area only under written permits issued under authority of the forest supervisor and concurred in by the Governor or his designated representative."

(b) Contrary to the claim that public use is "important and increasing", the Forest Service has repeatedly diminished the use of the area by sportsmen: The lakes are no longer stocked with fish, the area is not prime country for hunting, and use by campers has been deliberately discouraged. Secretary Freeman himself stated in February 1962 that "the Indians' rights to use the area for ceremonial purposes will be fully protected." At present, the Pueblo is refusing to approve permits for entry of recreationalists into the area. No commercial timber operations have occurred in the permit area and cannot occur without the Pueblo's consent.

3. *Validity of religious uses.*—Whether explicitly or by implication opponents of the bill have challenged the good faith of the Indians with respect to the religious importance of the Blue Lake area. The Indians' good faith and the validity of the religious ground for their claim are established by the following:

(a) The Indians have consistently claimed the entire Blue Lake area since 1904. The religious importance of the entire area has been consistently asserted by successive generations of Taos Indians over nearly 65 years.

(b) The Indians have continuously used the entire Blue Lake Area for religious purposes, despite issuance by the Forest Service of grazing permits to outsiders and ownership of a portion of the land by others. Their continuous use has been recognized by the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior. Religious use continues during all months of the year in sections not inaccessible because of snow; it is not confined to only a few days in August.

(c) The Indians seek no economic benefit or advantage beyond use of the land for limited grazing. They have never permitted commercial timber operations in the permit area and have objected to such operations in La Junta Canyon, which occurred while the State of New Mexico owned that area. Commercial or industrial "development" of the area would be a desecration the Pueblo would never permit. The religious claim is not a veiled attempt to obtain riches.

4. *Protection of existing uses.*—The bill protects the rights of the existing grazing permittees along the east side of the Rio Pueblo watershed. The Pueblo has always recognized and is anxious to protect the rights of downstream users of the waters of the Rio Pueblo. Passage of the bill would have no effect upon water rights.

5. *Conservation management.*—In order to protect the purity of the water supply of both the Indians and downstream users and to insure continued conservation practices, the bill makes the Forest Service responsible for continued management of the Rio Pueblo watershed. The Forest Service has objected that it should not be made responsible for land controlled by the Department of the Interior. In response to that objection, the Pueblo believes that management of the watershed should be vested in the Department of the Interior with authority for the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Forestry Division to contract with the Forest Service for particular conservation measures.