

I suspect that our friends the Taos have relied as much on this letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and his interpretation of what that bill meant as any other one letter that they may have had.

In your judgment, Mr. Greeley, has there been reason for the Taos Indians to attach the importance to the statement by the then Commissioner of Indian Affairs that seemingly has been the case.

Mr. GREELEY. Senator Hansen, I think the statement you have just made and the question you have raised is a valid one.

It is apparent that the Taos people have thought that the 1933 act and the 1940 permit gave more of a degree of exclusion in use than the Forest Service people thought.

As to how this came about and what they relied on for their use I would not want to try to say. The letter which you just quoted could be one of the reasons for this.

This is why I just made the point now, Senator, that I am satisfied that a good deal of the differences of opinion about how this land should be treated and whether the Forest Service was interfering with things that the Indians thought we should not interfere with, turns on this question of whether Congress intended by the 1933 act to provide that there would be exclusive use with no other use for any other purpose by anybody at any time or whether it was more limited.

Senator HANSEN. A few years ago, when I was Governor of Wyoming, I had the privilege of being host, along with Mrs. Hansen, to Wahleah Lujan, Miss Indian America.

This was the first time I came across the problem and developed an awareness of the various interests that are in such conflict in your State, Senator Anderson; and I will not soon forget the very earnest plea that this very talented and attractive young Indian maiden made for her people, expressing the hope that Congress, before too long, might recognize the validity of the Indians' claim and keep that promise that she felt had been made to them to restore to them these lands which loom so large in their religion.

I would ask you, Mr. Greeley—I am not a lawyer and I suspect a great many people who are not lawyers may read a particular statute and then the next thing they will do is turn to an attorney or someone and say, What does this mean?

I have seen this happen a number of times. It seems not at all unreasonable to me that the Indian people might look upon the interpretation that John Collier, who I would suppose spoke with some degree of authority for the U.S. Government, serving as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, made in interpreting for the Indian people what the law meant.

I appreciate this may be somewhat repetitious, but don't you think it would not be unreasonable for the Indians to assume that what Mr. Collier, their representative, said the statute meant could very well have been taken by them as spelling out what it did mean?

Mr. GREELEY. Mr. Collier was a man in whom a great many people had confidence and I am sure his words carried a great deal of weight; but I also have to point out, Senator, certainly as far as Forest Service people and Forest Service administrators—looking at the language of the act and responsible for administration of this area—could certainly reach no other conclusion than that Congress did intend that, recognizing the special sets of circumstances here, natural resources