

in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northern New Mexico. The history of the taking of this land, the incorporation of it into the national forest preserve, is well known.

For many years, the Taos Indians struggled almost alone to secure the sanctity of these lands, their sacred trails, their natural shrines.

Over the past 20 years, more and more of their fellow Americans—Indian and non-Indian—have joined them in their struggle to secure justice.

From the practical standpoint—aside from the matter of simple fairness to a spiritual, peaceful people who regarded these lands as holy long before the white man came—we of the national committee can see no reason to delay any longer the vesting of this land with the Indians to whom it rightfully belongs.

It has been argued by some that this small area should not be returned nor preserved as a wilderness and religious sanctuary, because it has commercial potential for the personal profit of non-Indian. It has been proposed that substitute lands having no value for others would be good enough for the Indians.

We have long been familiar—painfully familiar—with statements like these. They belong to the days of intolerance and discrimination when Indian lands were raided and stolen to satisfy the white man's greed. Such statements have no place in this country today.

We appeal to this Senate committee to affirm our Nation's honor and sense of justice by approving H.R. 3306 in this session of Congress and returning the Blue Lake area to its rightful Indian owners.

Senator ANDERSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Phipps. I have no questions.

Our next witness is Mr. Belindo.

**STATEMENT OF JOHN BELINDO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE
NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Mr. BELINDO. Mr. Chairman, it is my privilege and honor to appear before you and testify in behalf of my brothers, the Taos Pueblo Indians.

My name is John Belindo, Kowa-Navajo, executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, which represents 105 American Indian tribes including Alaskan native villages.

Mr. Chairman, as you well know, the Indian is not a demanding individual. The American Indian, for the most part, has enjoyed the special relationship that he has had with his fellow countrymen and his government. And throughout the years, in his dealings with his government, the Indian has been honest, his requests were never presented in a demanding way; they were always presented in a humble, fair, and just manner.

For many years the Indians wandered over the great mountains and plains and made this land their land. They found minerals and crops and trails that have helped to create a vast, rich nation. They are content with the resources that they had here and lived on them for many years. But when the ships came from across the ocean, the Indian land was quickly lost. The Indians were placed on small plots called reservations. And even now sometimes the lands left for them are taken away.