

Although there is a great need for the development of Indian resources, the cherished desires of the Indians seem to be forgotten or ignored. This is one of the concerns that the Taos Indians have. And this is one of the concerns that the All-Pueblo Indian Council has supported at the Pueblo of Taos, N. Mex., where the Blue Lake area is fought for by the people of that pueblo. The sacred lakes and lands of the Blue Lake area are the source of religion, and life itself for these people.

This area contains the watershed of the Rio Pueblo de Taos and the central shrines and sanctuaries of the Indian religion. Since 1906, when Blue Lake area was confiscated by the Government, the Taos people have struggled to have this "holy" land returned and have fought to preserve its sanctity. In 1965, the Indian Claims Commission made a binding court decision against the U.S. Government, upholding the claim of Taos Pueblo to the Blue Lake area and affirming its religious significance.

This bill, H.R. 3306, would forever end the threat of desecration and violation of the sacred shrines by restoring ownership of the Blue Lake area to the people of the Taos Pueblo. This bill also contains provisions which insure continued conservation management of the land. These provisions answer the objections, raised by some interests, that the forests might not receive adequate protection under Indian ownership and Federal trusteeship. Even without such provisions, forests on Indian trust lands are subject to highly skilled administration and protection by the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Branch of Forestry, by the Forest Service under an interdepartmental agreement, and by trained Indian firefighters.

These Indians do not seek economic benefits and this is established by their consistent assertion of the religious significance of the land, their refusal to develop commercially the timber available in the permit area, and their renunciation for monetary compensation for the areas.

Before the Pueblo Lands Board in 1927, the Taos Pueblo Indians were willing to relinquish \$297,684.67 as the purchase price for the lots in the town of Taos in exchange for the Blue Lake area of 50,000 acres. Doesn't this prove that the Taos Indians are not out for monetary gain? Doesn't this act prove to non-Indians that the Indian is willing to forego money to retain a sacred ground? Because of the essential secrecy of its religion, it has been difficult for the people of this pueblo to explain in terms satisfactory to the American mind why it must own and control the entire watershed for the Rio Pueblo. To insist that these people disclose more is to ask them to profane their holy mysteries.

If the power of the Indians' ancient religion is weakened, the bonds between the pueblo and its people will weaken. The authority of the Pueblo Council will be impaired, and there will be no system of effective leadership of the people. Maintenance of complete privacy in the Blue Lake area is the most important factor in preservation of the ancient shrines. Domination of the Blue Lake area by tourists, campers, sportsmen, and loggers will destroy the sacred secrecy and the natural environment of the area and with them the power of religion in the lives of the people.

This is a question more of religion than anything else, and we cannot emphasize it much more. The Taos Pueblo Indians like the rest