

It was saddening and distressing to me to see such a magnificent place being desecrated and abused by the very people who were ostensibly trying to protect it, their church, from such violation. I couldn't help but think and feel that their abuse of the area was no way to treat a church.

Be that as it may, it was suddenly surprising to us the mess did not cover a larger area. I had had the impression that most if not all of the tribe participated in the ceremonials.

It was the opinion of the forest ranger that not more than 40 to 60 Indians had come to Blue Lake. In my opinion, the signs indicated that the ranger was right.

Our stay at Blue Lake did not exceed 1 hour. We departed leaving nothing but our tracks, and proceeded directly to Bear Lake, which is open to fishing and overnight camping.

At Bear Lake, all the trash was in the pit. The campfires were buried, and no green timber had been cut.

My visit to Blue Lake and subsequent inquiries revealed that the Indians are not using the lake to the degree claimed. No Indians visited the lake on the day of our visit. We would have seen them.

It is impossible to visit Blue Lake during winter, because of deep snow and blizzard conditions. The elevation is near 11,000 feet.

Forest Service employees from the Pueblo reported for duty during every day of the ceremonials, even though time off was permitted to them.

Visitors to the Pueblo notice no apparent change in numbers or activity during the ceremonials. A game department pilot who has flown the area frequently reports that he has never seen any smoke or other signs of activity at Blue Lake.

There are those who welcome this apparent decline in the old order. More liberal members of the tribe view the old religion as a hindrance to economic growth and the well-being of their people. According to some, the tribal council has impeded progress and the personal freedom and civil rights of those within the tribe who would disagree.

Congressman Anthony Fernandez of New Mexico revealed such in his statement on the floor of the House. I am paraphrasing, here.

According to Congressman Fernandez, the individual members of the Taos Pueblo have no protection under our Bill of Rights. They are subject to the arbitrary dictates of the council. They have been denied the right to install modern utilities in their homes.

Their right to vote has been denied, under threat of arrest. They have no right to self-government, since the council picks its own new members. And, "They have no freedom of worship in the religion of their choice."

At this point, Mr. Chairman, I think it would be wise to consider who the proponents of this bill are.

There are a number of sincere individuals who are sympathetic to the cause of the Indians, and who support this bill in the belief that it is in the Indians' best interests.

Many of these people recall injustices done the American Indian in the past. They are unaware of all the facts in the case. They believe what they have been told about the Indians' religious freedoms being impaired.

They are moved by emotion and sympathy for the red man. However, it should be remembered that the Taos Indians have no broken treaties