

Third, never before has a land claim been recognized on a religious basis. This is the most dangerous of all precedents, because all land is considered sacred by Indians, and there are many highly sacred areas much more entwined in our secular society.

The statement by the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, that the Indians have greater need than the public, and therefore should be given the land, is a peculiar statement.

Senator METCALF. That is the House committee?

Mr. GUNTER. That is the House committee, in the report that accompanied the bill.

Since when does need justify right of ownership?

In any event, the citizens of this country stand to lose far more than this Blue Lake area, if they do not awaken to the dangers inherent in the present bill, and prevent not only this area but other equally important choice areas from being lost when they pass into private ownership.

To give the Indians this land will only perpetuate the Indian ghetto that now exists at Taos. It is high time that we who pose as guardians of the Indians of this land stop looking at them as a curiosity and something to be preserved in their natural state.

It is time we see to it that the Indian is helped in a way that will help him assume his rightful place in our society. It is high time we stop holding him back, under the guise of preserving his culture, when that very thing makes him a second-class citizen.

If we ever hope to achieve the equality of the races that we are all so stirred up about in our country at this time, we should be very careful to extend these rights to all our citizens, and not do things now which are exactly opposite to the general welfare of a small group of our first citizens.

That concludes my formal statement.

Senator METCALF. Do you have something to add?

Mr. GUNTER. I have those newspaper clippings.

Senator METCALF. You give them to the staff, and they will be incorporated in the record.

Mr. GUNTER. All right.

Senator METCALF. Thank you, Mr. Gunter, for your testimony. It has been very forceful.

Mr. GUNTER. I took the position that as an individual, and really not representing any particular group. I could afford to be a little bit off to one side than some of the people who are representing public groups, and so I hope that the testimony that I enter will be considered in the spirit in which it was given, and that I won't be considered too detrimental and derogatory to the Indians.

But we do have these facts that I wanted to bring out, and and I am afraid that some people, like a Government employee, who might know them, might feel in the position that he could not do the job that I have tried to do here.

Senator METCALF. Mr. Gunter, these hearings are not necessarily adversary proceedings, such as we have in a court, but we always welcome someone who has a very forceful point of view. It is helpful in the consideration of the committee of the whole issue involved, and you have been helpful. Your whole statement will be examined.