

I wish that I could have met your father, who was fly-casting champion of Colorado, because my fly casting has deteriorated in recent years, since long sessions have set in.

Mr. GUNTER. There are a few of us purists left, who wouldn't so much as put a worm on a hook.

Senator METCALF. I am afraid that I haven't even had a chance to throw a fly into some of those waters of Montana.

In any event, we are pleased with your testimony, and thank you for coming and appearing.

Mr. GUNTER. Thank you very much.

(The prepared statement referred to follows:)

STATEMENT OF N. PRESTON GUNTER, ALBUQUERQUE, N. MEX.

Mr. Chairman: I am N. Preston Gunter of Albuquerque, New Mexico. I am an Air Conditioning Engineer.

I welcome the opportunity to serve the people of New Mexico by presenting my views on H.R. 3306 and stating why I firmly believe this bill should not pass.

I have been a resident of New Mexico since 1940. I was born and raised in Colorado and have been an avid fisherman and hunter all my life. I was taught these skills and appreciation for the wild rocky mountains by my father who once held the Colorado State Fly Casting Championship, and in Colorado, that is a mark of distinction among all sportsmen.

Over the past four years I have made a detailed study of the question surrounding Blue Lake. I feel there are many points surrounding this controversy that have been accepted as fact by the Indian Claims Board, the Indian Claims Commission, and other study groups that simply are not true. There are other points raised in strong fashion by the groups favoring giving this area to the Taos Tribe that just are not borne out by any historical evidence.

Certain people assert that in their opinion this proposed legislation will not be precedent setting, or not seriously so.

Others claim that religion is the only reason the Taos Tribe wants this land.

In beginning, I would like to state that this Blue Lake is beauty beyond description. It is undoubtedly the crown jewel of the entire Rocky Mountains. All of which is fresh in my memory because of my most recent visit to this majestic spot a few days. Why should such beauty be the exclusive possession of a small minority group, many of whom have never seen it.

The Taos Tribe would have you believe they need this land for economic reasons, while in fact, they already own thousands and thousands of acres of much more usable land than the area now under discussion. They have been paid for many thousands more as is outlined in the Interior Department report. In fact, it is just these payment records that bring to light strong reasons why these Indians are not entitled to any of this land.

Two pieces of legislation, one passed in 1924 and the other in 1933, were designed to compensate the Indians (all 11 Pueblos including Taos) for any and all lands lost by them either to Spanish American settlers living on their land or by confiscation by the government.

The first time Taos tried to claim the Blue Lake Area was in 1933 when Taos was the only Pueblo to decline to sign the agreement to accept the monies appropriated. Prior to 1933, the issue of these lands was not mentioned in any of the official records. The other Pueblos signed the agreement. Taos held out asking for the Blue Lake area.

I think its significant to point out that the only reason we had the 1933 legislation is because there had been complaints that the 1924 legislation had been based on appraised values which were too low. The 1933 legislation was to correct this under-evaluation. The amounts arrived at were fair for their day and must be considered from this point of view. We must realize the government was trying to be fair and that the Taos Indians had not raised the issue of these Blue Lake acres previously.

We must also realize that there are 10 other Pueblos who were included in the 1924 and 1933 legislation, all of whom have certain areas they claim to have religious significance. Many of these Pueblos have already raised the issue and are looking eagerly to the results of these hearings.

I submit that the Santa Clara Indians have stated they should have 30,000 acres of national forest land adjacent to this reservation in exchange for right