

but the main cult was in the Taos tribe. A declining cult is referred to in the book "Cycles of Conquest" and this fits with the declining use of Blue Lake.

The early religion of the Pueblos was considered immoral and obscene by the officials of that day. The Taos council was arrested at one time for violations under the Indian Bureau's religious crimes code. The general shock and disapproval of the Indians by the early missionaries caused them to hide their religion and is the basis of the secrecy today.

The Indians claim the whole Pueblo goes to Blue Lake. This is not borne out by the facts. No appreciable decrease in the population of the Pueblo is noticed during the ceremonial days in August. Also, our investigation in the week after their ceremonial of 1968 would indicate that between 40 and 60 people camped at the Blue Lake site. This estimate was made by the ranger who has lots of experience cleaning up camp sites. The Forest Service people tell me that this has been the pattern for many years, fewer and fewer people actually go to Blue Lake.

It is also claimed that the Indians make consistent use of the whole 48,000 acre area. This is not supported by any evidence. In fact, the contrary is shown in the lack of travel on the trails and the observations made by the rangers responsible for the area.

The Indians claim they fear the intrusion of outsiders will defile the area with trash and litter. The records of the Forest Service show the few times white men have gone into the area in the last several years averaging about 16 permits per year. Yet the trash we discovered plainly shows the Indians have made no attempt to keep the area clean. The only trash in the Forest Service provided trash pits was a year old, put there the last time the Forest Service cleaned the area in 1967 after the August ceremonial. This year's trash was scattered all about and left just where it fell. No attempt whatsoever had been made by the Indians to stack their tee-pee poles in the manner they are cared for by the Forest Service. A few years of purely Indian care and even the Indians won't want to go to this beauty spot.

In conclusion I would like to summarize the three main precedents that will be broken by this bill. *First*, always Spanish land grants have taken precedence over Indian land claims. This principle was established by the King of Spain and recognized by our treaties when we acquired the land from Spain. About one-quarter of the land claimed by the Taos Pueblo was Spanish grant before being acquired by the Forest Service. The land grant areas in conflict here definitely will set a reverse precedent. *Second*, Indians have been paid for land in the past but never given title to it. This is most serious in view of the other Indian tribe claims all over the state of New Mexico and the United States. *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. 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 others 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.