

gressional committee recognized the need and desirability to protect the religious significance of the Blue Lake area. He, at that time, proposed that about 3,000 acres be set up for exclusive use by the Taos Indians. He suggested that this area be closed to all activities such as grazing and timber cutting. This would assure protection of the sacred area and also of the watershed.

Under the present 50-year special use permit issued by the Forest Service in 1940, the Pueblo de Taos has had almost exclusive use of over 32,000 acres for 28 years and exclusive use for 10 days each year for their religious ceremonies.

We feel that this permit has adequately protected the watershed and also the religious needs for the Indians of Taos Pueblo. They have free use of the water and wood for their personal use. Indian-owned cattle graze on this area of public-owned land, free of charge. The Indians do not take any responsibility for the management or protection of the area. It is our understanding that if this bill is passed, the lands would be transferred to the Department of Interior to be held in trust for the Indians.

We cannot see how transferring this land to another agency could possibly improve the amount of protection that could be afforded for worship and religious ceremonies for the Indians. Forest Service personnel are familiar with Indian officials and with the land boundaries. Any change of responsibility would necessitate the setting up of a new organization under the Department of the Interior to manage these lands.

The Taos Pueblo Indians have claimed that these 48,000 acres of land were stolen from them by the United States. The facts do not bear this out. The United States acquired the land in question by conquest and by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The Pueblo de Taos Indians were given their grant or "league" in 1815 and this was confirmed and patented November 1, 1864, by President Lincoln.

The Indians now own some 46,500 acres. This amounts to about 46 acres per person. In addition to this land which they own outright they have virtually exclusive use of the 32,000 acres granted to them by the special use permit of 1940. Moreover, there are some 8,000 more acres of national forest land which they more or less use but which is not a part of their free use grazing allotment. Thus, the Indians have a far larger per capita ownership of land than do the other citizens of northern New Mexico; many of whom, as you know, are well below the poverty line and need economic help.

Included in the lands which the Indians are now asking for is a tract of some 3,000 acres which was acquired by the Forest Service through land exchange from the State of New Mexico in 1952. Another 6,000 acres were acquired by land exchange from Mr. Will Ed Harris in 1950. Certainly, these lands should not be included in any giveaway to the Indians.

I personally have seen misuse of the lands owned by the Indians through improper grazing. The Indian private lands and the permitted national forest lands are grazed by members of an Indian association who own cattle. This association is composed of some 10 members. The remaining Indians derive no benefit whatsoever from the exclusive grazing use on the national forest permit area. It would not matter how much additional land was acquired by the Taos Pueblo, still only these few Indians would benefit.