

TAOS PUEBLO COUNCIL,
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE,
Taos, N. Mex., October 11, 1968.

Mr. EDWARD P. CLIFF,
Chief, Forest Service,
U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR CHIEF CLIFF: We wish to protest to you in the strongest possible terms two recent actions by officials of the Forest Service with respect to the Blue Lake Area. First, on September 6, 1968, Don Seaman, Supervisor of the Carson National Forest, and Duane R. Freeman, District Ranger at Taos, accompanied two persons having no official connection with the Forest Service and an unidentified photographer on a trip into the Blue Lake Area for questionable purposes. Second, Mr. Freeman sent the Pueblo a letter dated September 10, 1968 which misstates facts and betrays a disdainful attitude wholly incompatible with the 1933 mandate of Congress for "safeguarding the interests and welfare" of Taos Pueblo in the Blue Lake Area.

It is unclear to us why Messrs. Seaman and Freeman accompanied Jon W. Little, N. Preston Gunter and a photographer into the Blue Lake on September 6. If the purpose of their trip was to investigate the condition of the Indian ceremonial ground and camp ground near Blue Lake they should have invited representatives of the Pueblo to accompany them. We have always understood that the Forest Service desired Indian cooperation in the maintenance of neat and sanitary conditions around Blue Lake. However, it is apparent that Messrs. Seaman and Freeman knew that Messrs. Little and Gunter wished to make the trip in order to gather information and photographs to be used against the Pueblo at the Senate hearings on H.R. 3306. They therefore lent their official capacities to a scheme to undercut the Pueblo's position in support of that bill.

We believe that it is improper for official Forest Service personnel to go into the Special Permit Area for the purpose of supporting attacks on our Pueblo. Moreover, Mr. Little in his statement to the Senate Subcommittee dishonestly used the picture of the tree stumps, which was captioned, "No way to treat a church. Trash pit is only a few steps away from the Indian campsite at Blue Lake. Note unburied camp fire and freshly cut green stumps." The actual site at which the photograph was made is not at the Indian campground nor in the Indian ceremonial ground; it lies between the ceremonial ground and the Forest Service administrative cabin. Therefore, the photograph is not of an "Indian camp site at Blue Lake." The stumps in the photograph were made (by Mr. Freeman's subsequent admission) at least three or four years ago and were not "freshly cut, green stumps."

We believe that the least the Forest Service can now do is publicly disavow and dissociate itself from Mr. Little's statement to the Senate Subcommittee and from his misleading photographs.

With respect to Ranger Freeman's letter of September 10, both the arbitrary tone and the unfounded charges contained therein are wholly unacceptable. The letter reflects a patronizing and disdainful attitude toward the Pueblo which can only be described as regrettable.

Ranger Freeman's charge that the Blue Lake Area "had been left in somewhat of a mess after the ceremonials in August" is without foundation. As we have noted previously, the area was cleaned up by an assigned group from the Pueblo immediately following the ceremonial on August 25, twelve days before the September 6th visit reported in Ranger Freeman's letter. A joint trip to Blue Lake on October 1 that we arranged with Ranger Freeman, an account of which is enclosed, did not disclose any "mess" left by the Indians. There were no "cans and bottles . . . strewn about," although some old accumulation of trash was discovered out of sight under bushes—from its age obviously, *not* left there by the "ceremonials in August." As for the "cigarettes and gum wrappers," upon close inspection a few were noted on the trail leading through the ceremonial ground to the Forest Service cabin, which is used by Forest Service trail riders and others entering the area.

The inspection trip with Ranger Freeman on October 1 disclosed the most serious sanitary problems to be in the immediate vicinity of the Forest Service cabin: a quantity of trash in the rear lying about as open garbage pit, an unsightly barbed wire fence and scattered high stumps, trash by a shepherd's stove nearby, overgrazed and barren earth within the administrative area, a large quantity of horse manure and an outhouse which directly pollute the