

Pueblo Lands Board of that period would return the sacred Blue Lake Area of 50,000 acres. Their generous offer was accepted, insofar as the loss of \$300,000 went, but the other half of the bargain was not fulfilled. So the tribe had given up a rightful claim and got nothing in return. As the result of a Senate investigation several years later, the Pueblo was instead granted a special use permit for a portion of the area, which will soon expire.

Of the 130,000 acres involved in the ICC decision, the Indians insist that for the 50,000-acre Blue Lake area they cannot accept compensation. This is the area of the Rio Pueblo de Taos watershed in the Sangre de Cristo mountains, which no money can replace. The tribe is willing to accept compensation for its property outside the valley, but the watershed is held sacred by the tribe as an integral part of its life, and cannot be given up.

A bill was introduced in the current session of Congress by Senator Clinton P. Anderson of New Mexico (S. 3085) which would give the Indians "trust title" to the 50,000 acres of the watershed in which they live. At a hearing on this bill, the U.S. Forest Service opposed the bill, and was asked to submit a report on the specific "shrines" or sacred locations deemed essential to the Indians' religion. To date no such report has reached the Senate Committee, consequently it has published no report on the bill. Action is stymied in Congress—a situation presumably caused by the Forest Service and benefiting the Forest Service, which prefers the present arrangement to the Anderson bill.

As a result of the foregoing events, much interest has centered upon the claims made by the Indians that the headwaters and tributaries of the stream on which they live are essential to the religious freedom of the tribe. The Forest Service might be willing to give the Indians exclusive use of the rocky cliffs and barren slopes on the western side of the valley, but it seems anxious to retain as much as possible of the more fertile eastern slope, on which timber allegedly worth several million dollars is growing. The Forest Service has received an offer of extensive and recently-lumbered lands from a wealthy lumberman in return for timber rights on this eastern slope. Senator Anderson has expressed concern that this valuable timber should be harvested rather than "going to waste."

Opposition to the bill rests upon two fundamental misconceptions. The first of these is that the Indians have religious ties only to certain locations called "shrines" and that the remainder of the watershed is religiously neutral for them. This is not the case.

The relationship between the tribe and the land is an organic one; they feel that the entire watershed is integral to the life of the tribe, and is indissolubly linked with the tribe's long and continuous history of occupation of this region. The tribe and the valley have grown old together. The members of the tribe feel an ancient identity, not only with Blue Lake—the headwaters of their life-sustaining stream—but with the entire watershed, its plants and animals. Anything which mutilates the valley hurts the tribe. If the trees are cut, the tribe bleeds. If the springs or lakes or streams are polluted, the lifestream of the tribe is infected. The mining of ore would inflict wounds upon the land and upon the people who revere it.

There are two high-altitude meadows (Pretty Park, Wild-Onion Park) where the Indians gather rare plants used for medicinal, nutritive, and ceremonial purposes: wild onion, wild strawberry, wild asparagus (o-sha). To these peaceful places individual Indians would come to commune with God, to pray for health, growth, and game. Unfortunately, grazing by the cattle of non-Indians has severely depleted these wild plants. Both of these parks are on the eastern slope of the valley, in the area containing valuable timber.

Some areas have been identified by the Indians with certain animals, such as Deer Lake, Deer Creek, Deer Canyon (also on the eastern slope). These localities serve as shrines of honor and respect accorded the animals with whom the Indians share the woodland. Whenever an Indian enters Deer Canyon, or speaks or thinks of it, he salutes the species upon whose flesh and bone, horn and hide, he relies for many of his needs. Not only in these designated "shrines," but throughout the area, the Indians habitually clean and skim and deepen the springs and pools where the animals come to drink.

The watershed also supplies various natural objects used in ceremonial dances and for other ritual purposes, such as clay for paint (from Pueblo Peak and Willow Creek), evergreens and other plants and herbs (from the sacred lakes and various springs and streams), and the feathers of hawk and eagle (from their nesting-places on the high ridges). There are also annual ceremonial pilgrimages (in August) to Blue Lake, Star Lake, Buffalo Grass Spring, and other shrines.