

The Santa Fe WCA is fundamentally opposed to HR 3306 for many reasons which will be enumerated herein. Basically, we feel that the legislation obviously will discriminate in favor of the Taos Indians and against the remaining citizens of this Country, and in particular, against those persons in New Mexico and surrounding states who have in the past been able to use and enjoy the land concurrently with the Indians. Moreover, we feel that the legislation, if passed, will set a dangerous precedent for this Country in general, and for the State of New Mexico in particular, since we have a large number of Indian Pueblos which have expressed their intent to make the same claim on other land in the State. A group claiming to represent our people of Spanish descent claim ownership of substantially all of New Mexico's public land and a great deal of its private land.

The State of New Mexico, led by the Honorable Clinton P. Anderson, and other outstanding conservationists throughout the Country, have fought long and hard to set aside certain portions of our remaining public land for use by the public in general to be preserved as wilderness areas or as National Forests. In fact, much of the land involved in HR 3306 is presently National Forest land with free use being given to the Taos Indians by order of the Forest Service. This land has in the past been administered under the "multiple use" principle so that all citizens can enjoy it, along with the Taos Indians. In August of each year, that portion of the involved land around Blue Lake is reserved to the exclusive use of the Taos Indians for their ceremonies. Presently, the land is used regularly for recreation purposes by a great number of people, including Spanish-Americans, Anglo-Americans and Indian-Americans. Many tourists from outside the State of New Mexico have in the past been able to enjoy the land. The supervision by the Forest Service minimizes permanent damage by such extensive use.

In an editorial in The New York Times circulated throughout the State of New Mexico and elsewhere by the Taos Pueblo Council, the Indians' position is stated. Their basic reasoning is that since Indians feel close to the land, and since it contains a valuable water shed, and further since the land has had a "prominent spiritual significance for centuries", it should be given to them for their exclusive use. They state that when the land was taken into the Carson National Forest in 1906, they were promised that the Taos Indians would have "exclusive use of the area for their personal needs." They claim that this "exclusive use" has been infringed upon by other citizens of this Country, and that therefore, they should get the land back so that it can be used exclusively by them. It is clear that their design and intent is to appropriate the land for their own use to the exclusion of other members of the public. Obviously, this is an improper and discriminatory intent, and the selfish motives of the Indians should not be rewarded by granting them 48,000 to 50,000 acres of land belonging to all of us, including the Indians.

The history of the land squabbles in New Mexico among various groups of people, including Indian-Americans and Spanish-Americans is well known. Substantially every acre of our public domain, be it National Forest, State Parks or wilderness areas is threatened by claims from various groups who say they have some ancestral right to the land to the exclusion of all other persons. Recently, one of the more notorious claimants, Reis Tijerina, was convicted in the Federal District Court for appropriating one of our National Park Areas and assaulting a park ranger who sought admission to the area. The group not only claims the park area as its own, but it has sought to set up that area as a completely separate country outside the United States and to establish its own government therein. This is only one example of the dangerous condition existing in this States which can only be fostered and encouraged by the present legislation, if passed.

It is the position of the Santa Fe WCA that the public domain should be preserved for use by the public as a whole and not given into the exclusive use of any private interest group.

It is not denied that the Taos Indians do use the small acreage surrounding Blue Lake for certain ceremonies in August of each year. Respect for their rights to use this land has been maintained for three decades or more, and they are given the exclusive use of this area during their ceremonies. They cannot claim that this right has been infringed upon since they themselves guard the area with armed men while their ceremonies are in progress, and no outsider, be he Anglo, Spanish or whatever, is allowed into the area.

We are informed that the Indian Claims Commission has awarded a large sum of money to the Taos Indians to compensate them for whatever land they owned when the Carson National Forest was established and were not compen-