

and arrange for a conference in an hour or so. Then I rode the two and a half miles on in to Taos and got two of my staff out of bed. I set one to recruiting men in Taos for a fire crew, and the other went back to the Pueblo with me to get a crew of Indians for, with the tinder dry forest and persistent high wind I knew we had a terrific job on our hands.

The Governor of the Pueblo, his War Chief and others, including a Carlisle College graduate for interpreter were assembled. I asked for 20 to 30 men to be ready to start at dawn. The Governor would not agree to send any men until he had my repeated assurance that they would be well paid, well fed and provided some bedding. The delaying tactics were provoking. They were in no hurry, and they did not say, as might be expected, "That fire is in our sacred country, we will send all the men you need at once."

But of course the Forest Service paid them, fed them and bought 20 sugans (heavy bed quilts) for them. The Spanish Americans at Taos asked no questions about pay, food or bedding.

The fire got big and bad. The Indians worked well once they got started, were fed well and took turns using the sugans. I put in 72 hours, including the day I discovered it, without any sleep.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion I must again emphasize the fact that I am in no way prejudiced against these Indians. I want to see their lot improved as rapidly and as much as possible. While I lived in Taos many of them were my good friends. However, the answer does not lie in giving them this big slice of National Forest land. It would not contribute anything to their financial and living conditions. If the Government owes them anything pay them, then they can use the money to improve their schools, their housing, sanitation and other living conditions. As it is they have free grazing, free timber, a well protected watershed and recreational and religious use of the land and privacy at Blue Lake.

I am firmly convinced that the welfare and best interests of the public, Taos Valley NonIndians and the Pueblo Indians themselves will be best served by continued administration, protection and management of these lands by the Forest Service as it has been doing for the past sixty-two years. We must remember that these lands are a high type, productive watershed which must be well protected in the public interest.

I appreciate the opportunity of presenting this statement.

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STATEMENT OF CLAUDE O. WANER, ALAMOGORDO, N. MEX.

Mr. Chairman, I am Claude O. Waner of Alamogordo, New Mexico.

The opportunity afforded to present a statement at this hearing on H.R. 3306 and point out many reasons why this Bill should not pass is greatly appreciated.

Altho I am a fairly new resident of New Mexico I have been fortunate to be in the position to have obtained first hand information concerning the problems involved in H.R. 3306.

Let me say here I am not prejudiced in any way what so ever against the American Indians. In fact I have always felt the Indian has been most unjustly treated.

Even tho I do feel this way, I cannot understand how the passing of H.R. 3306 will be actually helping them. It is quite true that traditionally the Taos Pueblo Indians have used some 3,000 acres in the basin surrounding Blue Lake as a rendezvous spot for certain of their religious ceremonies, three or four days in August every year and that they desire complete privacy for the ceremonies. It has been my understanding this request has always been respected.

Since there never has been any objection to this request and it has been respected, a change in the present status of this 3,000 acres is totally unnecessary.

While it might be feasible the Taos Pueblo Indians be given the 3,000 acres because of their claim to it as their Church it is absurd to go along with their claim that the whole 48,000 or 50,000 acres they are seeking to acquire is sacred religious ground. It sounds to me very much like a pure and simple play on the sentiment of the American public to get this land for ulterior purposes.

It is a well known fact this is a prime water shed for the northern part of the State, used by the Indians and small land owners in the region. Since this is so, it is necessary to be maintained by someone with experience in this area. The U.S. Forest Service with its knowledge is well equipped and qualified to do the job. The Taos Indians are neither equipped or qualified to undertake such a project.