

The preservation of the water shed is but one of the reasons this land should be left as it is. The land is now being managed so that the entire population derives some good from it, instead of one small group.

And let's not deceive ourselves, if this bill is passed it would set a most troublesome and dangerous precedent. It is common knowledge that other Indian Pueblo, Tribes and so-called minority groups have their claims in the making if this bill is passed. Unless the government is ready and willing to concede and respect all such claims the passage of this bill can only make for more and greater troubles, it seem to me.

I appreciate the opportunity of presenting this statement.

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STATEMENT OF GLEN W. BURTRAM, SANTA FE, N. MEX.

I am Glen W. Burtram, a resident of Santa Fe, New Mexico, for the past 20 years, during which time I have been interested and active in all matters relating to conservation in general and within New Mexico in particular. I am writing this letter in the hope that it be included and considered in the record of the hearings of your subcommittee on H.R. 3306, since I am not financially able to appear in person.

H.R. 3306, relating to the giving of the "Blue Lake" area to the Indians of the Taos Pueblo, is probably the most important land bill to come before the Congress since passage of the Wilderness Bill. If this bill is enacted into law, it will establish a precedent which will require of each succeeding Congress that it deal with a continuing flood of similar proposals from other Indian tribes throughout the United States. If this proposal has merit, then the other claims will have merit, since it is an undeniable fact that the Indian's use of all areas of this Country pre-dates that of any other segment of our population.

I happen to know that several other Pueblos were preparing claims of a similar nature in 1966, but were prevailed upon by the officials of Taos Pueblo to postpone presentation of those claims until after disposition by the Congress of the present bill. It was feared that a flood of claims would jeopardise the passage of this bill, and would be better received after a precedent had been established.

Actually, it is hard to understand how the Indians would better themselves by the passage of this bill, since they now have exclusive grazing privileges on most of the area concerned. The Blue Lake area, at the request of the Indians, is also closed at certain periods of each year to allow for the undisturbed observance by the Indians of their ancient religious rites. So far as I have been able to determine, no request by the Indians to the Forest Service for closure for this purpose has ever been refused. Under the circumstances, it must be assumed that the Indian's claim for this land is predicated upon some change in use not now allowed by Forest Service regulations.

It should also be pointed out that the area concerned in this bill is heavily forested and is an important watershed for the area. Blue Lake is the source of the Rio Pueblo, which irrigates large numbers of small farm plots throughout the valley. These small farms are subsistence type operations by low income Spanish-Americans which are used to supplement their meagre income from other sources. This watershed must be protected at all costs, and no other federal agency has demonstrated a willingness and capability to do this as has the Forest Service. Therefore, to protect the livelihood of the large number of people concerned, the land status should remain unchanged and under the capable management of the Forest Service.

A further point should be made here. Historically, when the United States has owed a debt to another party, settlement of that debt has been made in United States currency. If something is owed to the Indians, it should be paid in money, not in a giveaway of a part of the important natural resources of this country, which belong to all the people. In our zeal for the rights of the minority, we must not overlook completely the fact that the majority also has some rights.

Finally, it should be pointed out that Blue Lake is a small lake, and it is not necessary to set aside the entire area between the Pueblo and the Lake for use as a religious shrine, which is what the Indians are asking. As a comparison, Jerusalem is an important religious shrine for all Christians, but that does not mean that all the land between my house and Jerusalem should be set aside as a religious shrine, and I hope that I shall always retain enough reason not to expect such a thing.