

totally unable to maintain and protect them from fire and other hazards. Their ability and will to protect them now has not materially increased in the intervening years. The watershed is far too important to abandon to luck.

Some of the lands the Taos Indians are claiming have only recently been taken into Carson National Forest in a land trade arrangement with the State of New Mexico. It is hard to believe they have as valid a claim to this land as they have to the remainder. Admitting this fault in their claims cast suspicion on the whole.

It is not practical, nor is it sensible, for this generation to right the wrongs of past generations. It can never be done equitably. As a result, built up and populated areas are never contemplated to be returned to any claimant Indian tribe. The fact that the Blue Lake area is a wilderness really does not alter the basis for denying them title and possession of the land. Can a present injustice to the greater common good ever correct and injustice (assuming we admit this injustice) done by past generations?

The most revolting aspect of the whole furor over this land area is the "religious" connotations. They are immaterial and brought forward only to elicit sympathy from the emotional and ignorant. Even if the area was a prehistoric place of worship, consideration of these religious aspects is inconsistent with our principals of separation of church and state. Additionally, it opens a fresh can of worms by giving precedent to Baptists, Catholics, Mormons, Hippies, ad infinitum, to dip into the public wealth on the basis of obscure claims.

As it is, the Taos Indians enjoy superior rights on most of this land at the moment. They are permitted to close it to the public when they observe their "pagan" ceremonies at Blue Lake. This is enough. If the Congress chooses to salve a misplaced conscience by heeding this black-mail, let it pay it off in something more reasonable than an irreplaceable wilderness. Additionally, let them not subject the general population to the hazards of the inevitable mismanagement of this part of our national resources with consequences extending far beyond the boundaries of the land they seek.

Sincerely,
TAOS, N. MEX.

C. G. CUNNINGHAM.

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS,
DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS,
Minneapolis, Minn., September 19, 1968.

Hon. GEORGE MCGOVERN,
Chairman, Senate Interior Committee,
Indian Affairs Subcommittee,
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR MCGOVERN : Reference is made to three proposed bills before your sub-committee relating to the Blue Lake area of New Mexico. In June of this year, the House of Representatives, by unanimous vote, approved a bill that would restore the entire area to its rightful owners, the people of Taos Pueblo.

Since that time, however, two bills sponsored by Senator Anderson of New Mexico would limit the number of acres involved, substitute lands are proposed, and limited use is to be enforced.

It is with great disgust and anger to find at this late date that there are still those white men in public office with callous disregard for even the most basic concept of human and civil rights as they concern the American Indian are able to represent the United States as Senators, the protectors of our Constitutional guarantees.

In the past, we have gone through more than three centuries of double talk, double dealing, graft and corruption when it concerned Indian lands. Even Mr. Eisenhower's administration with its infamous termination program under Public Law 108 sought to deprive us of what little lands we had left.

With Taos Pueblo, we have a case in which this land was taken in 1906 without compensation. (Imagine the outcry in your state if this happened to the white ranches.) In 1940 a Congressional Committee recommended that this land be returned to Taos. In 1966 the Indian Claims Commission, an arm of our federal government, ruled that the land belonged to Taos.

Recently during the political conventions of our two major parties many people, including yourself, gave much time to the discussion of integrity in government and aid and assistance to minority persons. This is the time to give truth to your words.