

Joe Upicksoun's Testimony Damages

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 9) Joseph Upicksoun is likely to wish he had never said it.

Reliable sources close to the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee report that insults directed to Representatives Haley and Aspinall by Upicksoun may be responsible for the loss of up to seven votes for the Alaska Federation of Natives' bill during that committee's mark-up session on land

claims legislation.

By Friday morning, the last day of a week of hearings before the committee, all parties concerned viewed the hearings as the most thorough and most productive ever held on the Alaska Native land claims.

There was a spirit of cooperation between witnesses and congressmen in trying to understand the land claims issue - "a desire to get to the basics," as AFN president Don Wright put it.

Then Joe Upicksoun read his statement. It contained some of the finest arguments ever advanced.

(Continued on page 6)

Joe Upicksoun's Testimony Damages . . .

(Continued from page 1)

ced on behalf of the settlement sought by the AFN.

He explained that the North Slope wished to retain what it already has, "Dominion over our homeland." It was a convincing argument for a fair and just settlement of the Alaska Native land claims.

It might have been effective, but the memory of Congress will probably file only a few small phrases:

"I say to the two Chairmen who are personally sponsoring H. R. 3100 that if their version of the solutions be adopted the Eskimos will be back here every year and we think that we can inflame the conscience of the

United States to politically defeat these men...

"I accuse the two Chairmen of trying to fool the balance of the Congress, of trying to fool the Natives of Alaska and in particular of trying to fool the Eskimos of the North Slope...

"We condemn the two Chairmen for Eighteenth Century thinking ...

"The sponsors of H. R. 3100 should be retired from public life. They are unworthy."

Congress is a slow-moving body prodded on by a lengthy list of established rules and procedures. Strict adherence to its traditions and rudimentary respect for its members is demanded of all who do business before it. Personal attacks are not tolerated, let alone received with sympathy

This is a shocking display to

some. To others, it is a reason to say no to the demands of Alaska Natives. The chairman has been impugned. It may have been the excuse most convenient to seven critical members of the committee and their seven critical votes.

Name-calling and fish-pounding is a familiar tactic to the leaders of the Arctic Slope Native Association. Perhaps it should have been reserved for situations where it has proved to be most effective.

It should have been kept for bars and late-night hotel rooms.

Substantial segments of the statement were concerned with adequate vision for lawyer fees:

"We want to know that our lawyers have been faithful and we appreciate their work. They now have in excess of ten thousand hours of their time in re-

presenting us since 1966 and I can certify to you that these have been faithful and productive hours."

"They now have almost \$50,000 in out-of-pocket expenses spent on our behalf. We think that the committee would be anxious to know these facts because we have confidence that this committee will be fair not only with us but with the lawyers once it knows the facts. Thus, the \$700,000 provision in H. R. 3100 is totally inadequate for all of the attorneys to share."

Had the same diligence been paid to protocol as to the means of paying off Fred Paul whose law firm represents the Arctic Slope Native Association, the land claims issue may have achieved recognition solely on its merits.