

Editorial—

The Scramble for Claims Opinions

The scramble for recognition of opinions on native land claims in Alaska is coming on thick and fast as Congress is getting set to legislate on the century old problem. Many of the opinions are truly knowledgeable and fair but the rest of them are useless and degrading to the native people because of the lack of knowledge of the claims' true situations and complexities.

Alaska native claims could be one of the most complex matters ever handled in search of a solution. They might have been complicated but the fact that they have no true background of a military conquest but are based on Indian title or aboriginal possessory rights of Alaska's native people. This fact have been confused by many would-be opinion makers who seemed to think that there was an actual conquest and tend to overlook the fact that the natives do have rights which are now being encroached upon. Hence the native land claims.

The so-called sale of Alaska by Russia has also been confusing many people who think that the transaction was a real estate deal. Russia sold its control of territory it had established through incursion into Alaska. That country never made its encroachments farther north than St. Michael on the coast near the mouth of Yukon River when it decided to sell its incursion control.

The work of Alaska native claims that is going on now in Washington is being done with the best expertise available. Men like Donald R. Wright, president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, his board of directors, their counsel, regional native organization officials and their counsels, knowledgeable senators and congressmen, are working to produce an equitable solution to the native land claims. They should be given the chance to do the work with least clutter of half truths which are being spieled by people with little knowledge of the mechanics of the Alaska native land claims.