

# NATIVES PROPOSE 51<sup>ST</sup> STATE

## Group Plans Petition Of President to Create Alaska Native State

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ANCHORAGE, (Special)—The State has often been accused of neglecting its poverty stricken natives while it grows rich off of lands once belonging to them.

And, voicing a similar criticism, a small group of natives has proposed what it feels to be the only solution—the creation of a 51st State, the Alaska Native State.

“Our people are tired of waiting for the money to come,” one native spokesman said.

“We want self-government—government by our people.”

And to discuss the possibility and chart a tentative course of action, those spearheading the movement held their first meeting in Anchorage last Saturday.

Their next step will be to test the idea in the villages.

If sufficient support is forthcoming, the group, officially calling itself the Interim Congress of the Alaska Native State, plans to petition the President and the

government of the United States for “the creation of a new state to comprise the Native areas of Alaska . . . or reversion to territorial status.”

Lasting five hours, the first meeting of the interim congress, currently composed of eight people, was attended by only a few members.

Al Nakak, a native from Nome, is acting as spokesman for the group and can be reached through P.O. Box 545, Nome, Alaska 99762. No other names have been released yet.

Another meeting has been

(Continued on page 6)

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(Continued from page 1)

scheduled for the near future, and in the meantime, an appeal will be made for assistance and support from individuals and organizations regardless of racial or ethnic orientation and for additional members of the Interim Congress.

This Congress will later transfer its authority to the actual Congress of the Alaska Native State to be comprised of one representative from all towns and villages in the proposed new state, according to members.

The group is not a part of the Alaska Federation of Natives, Nakak stressed, although it fully supports the AFN in its land claims efforts.

The Interim Congress, he continued, wants more than the AFN is requesting in its land claims settlement proposal.

And, he added, the idea for a 51st state did not originate from a recent speech made by AFN president Emil Notti. In the speech, Notti said he would advocate the creation of a separate Indian nation in Western Alaska if Congress does not pass a "fair" claims bill.

As described in the petition now being circulated, the boundaries of the new state would run roughly from where the Yukon River crosses the Canadian border west to Livengood, then in a straight line to Mt. McKinley and toward and down the center of Cook Inlet embracing all territory and islands North and West of the described line.

Other questions remain unanswered.

There are no answers on what form the state government would take, the location of the capitol, or methods of obtaining revenue.

These are all matters to be decided by the actual congress of the new state, according to the current group.

But on the question of sources of revenue, there seems to be little concern, for the territory staked out contains the rich North Slope as well as fish, timber, and mineral resources.

The members are uncertain

of the steps necessary in creating a native state but stated that they will pursue their plans regardless of any land claims settlement coming out of Congress.

The creation, they say, might require the approval of Congress and even the state legislature, where they definitely expect opposition. The state now has possession of and is leasing much of the oil land on the North Slope.

Such questions are to be answered, the petition states, by a five-member commission appointed by the President within 30 days after receiving the petition.

The commission is to meet with the Congress of the Alaska Native State within 9 months and then within 60 days is "to make recommendations and develop reasonable procedures to implement the creation of a new state and, in addition, to otherwise remedy the injustices to Alaskan Natives."

The injustices referred to are listed in the petition. They comprise a major portion of the 6-page document and cover such areas as land acquisition, lack of native representation in State government, lack of an effective means of self government in the villages and other activities "which have denied the Native People the equal protection to which they are entitled."

The Interim Congress plans to petition the government of the United States for a redress of these grievances according to its rights under the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

Undoubtedly, the group has a long way to go from its first meeting last weekend.

In the coming weeks spokesmen have stated that they know the idea will undergo severe testing as the petition is circulated in the villages and distributed statewide.

And, also facing them will be the possibility that the natives themselves do not want a new state.