

# Support for Morris—

## *Alaska Delegation, Morton Join*

WASHINGTON — Alaska's congressional delegation proved among Morris Thompson's strongest supporters November 14 in U. S. Senate confirmation hearings for Thompson as Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Delegation members reaffirmed support for Thompson this week after some question arose during hearings about his ability to show fairness to non-resident Alaska Natives.

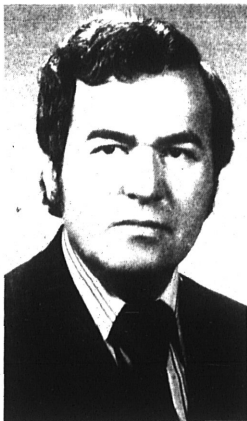
U. S. Senators Mike Gravel and Ted Stevens and U. S. Rep. Don Young all spoke out strongly on behalf of Thompson, an Athabascan Indian from Tanana who would be the youngest Commissioner in BIA history.

During hearings before the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee last week, Gravel called for speedy confirmation of Thompson, whom he spoke of as a "uniquely qualified" candidate for the post.

"I speak in Morris' behalf not just as a fellow Alaskan, but as a good friend and personal admirer," the Democratic Senator said.

"Over the past years, I have had the opportunity to observe Morris administer the Alaska area of the BIA in a fair and effective manner with vision and with diligence.

"His leadership expressed itself in valuable input to the Alaska Native land claims settlement and its complex implementation. He is respected



**MORRIS THOMPSON**

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equally by employees and co-workers. He has received the almost unanimous support of scores of Indian groups in Alaska and elsewhere," Gravel said.

In a report to the Tundra Times received at press time, Gravel reaffirmed his support of Thompson and added, "He offers the potential for reshaping efforts toward fulfilling the federal government's responsibility to American minorities.

His nomination comes at a time when the Bureau of Indian Affairs so desperately needs his kind of capable leadership."

A statement from Senator Ted Stevens was not received by press time, but Stevens was reported to remain confident that confirmation of Thompson could be expected soon. Stevens was quoted as saying that Thompson's experience and capabilities were clearly revealed during the hearings.

A member of the committee, Senator James Buckley of New York described Thompson as a man of "excellent caliber" and

indicated support for his confirmation.

Other sources close to the Interior Committee predicted that questions about Thompson's ability to protect the interests of non-resident Alaska Natives would be satisfactorily resolved and that Thompson would be confirmed.

U. S. Representative Don Young, a Republican congressman from Fort Yukon, spoke of Thompson's understanding of the traditional subsistence life style of Alaska Natives.

"As a trained engineer, technician and administrator, he also understands contemporary America and the processes by which our government functions," Young said.

"Some knowledgeable men scoffed when Thompson became the youngest area director in the bureau's history. Yet his performance in that demanding job — administering 55 schools, 1,200 employees, five offices and a 10,000 ton cargo ship — clearly demonstrated beyond any shadow of doubt that he was capable, fair and understanding," Young said.

Interior Secretary Rogers Morton described the nomination of Thompson as a "key step in assuring the constructive progress in helping our Indian citizens move forward."

"Morris Thompson . . . will bring to the Bureau of Indian Affairs the professional qualifications and leadership which are needed to meet the urgent challenges facing the Indian people today," Morton added.

Thompson, who returned to Juneau on Saturday from his hearings in Washington, commented briefly to the Tundra Times. "I answered the questions from the committee as best as I could. Now it is up to the committee," he said.