

Outline of Claims History-

Author Loses Flush of Romance of Being in Foreign Land

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SETTLEMENT - PART IEN

OLONGAPO CITY, R.P. -

The romance of living in a new country during my first few months here is gone. My life is empty of new experiences, and filled only of dreams of what is past and thoughts of where I should be now and what I should be doing. I think that part of the reason I feel this way is because I have lost several good friends recently and because I have never been able to easily accept the death of good friends.

There is also the matter of watching, from a distance, an event which I saw approaching for several intense and confusing years. For all the time that I spent looking into the claims, I am yet less confident

of my knowledge of it.

And because of what has happened, the future of my life and the lives of people close to me is almost anybody's guess. I understand little of it, and that frightens me. What is even more of a worry is that many people understand still less.

I should be spending all my time trying to make the settlement better known to people who need, and perhaps won't get, information to make the decisions of their lives. But I can't.

I must sit here and think of questions affecting lives, try to remember them, and wait for an agonizing length of time to attempt to find answers. I would have laughed at eleven months a couple of years ago, but I sure the hell can't laugh now.

I can't think lightly of the questions that form in my mind.

What educational opportunities will my people have? What is the worth of the land we are now selecting? What standards are used to determine that worth? What investments are being made with the money we were paid for a way of life? What choices do we have and who is aware of them?

I am not even sure of what the philosophy behind the act truly was. What intentions? Let alone whether they are being carried out. How many people, old now, will die without seeing anything from it? How many people are we overlooking? Thinking these things, I haven't gone to sleep before dawn in two weeks, and couldn't sleep at all the past two days.

How can our people, spread over two hundred villages and fifty states and nobody can tell how many countries, be in-

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formed of what is at stake and the basic facts required to decide our future? I know only too well how few people actually knew what happened on December 18, 1971.

Many, many things were unknown to me then, and it was my job to know them. It was my assignment to know these things and communicate them to my people. I am nearly scared to death by how little I knew then and how much I am discovering now.

How about the man in Barrow I talked with last June? Nobody listened to him because he drank heavily for several years, even though he is sober now. He wanted to know why his son couldn't get a job. Nobody listened and nobody answered.

What about the old man from Unalakleet who asked me when the fences would come and he would have to stop hunting. Or the Aleut in New York who needed to pay the university the balance of a loan in order to graduate, and who was broke, and who asked me if the settlement will be of any help?

People are getting tired of hearing us say that Natives die young, and endure incredible hardships to get an education, and live in poverty, and are hungry. Some even want our people to pay for services normally provided by a government for all its citizens.

We do have problems. And now, we have to use everything we can get to make a success of the settlement we fought for, or lose all that we came into

this country with. I was worried that we rushed into the claims, but knew that we would lose more if we didn't settle quickly.

But now, I worry of how we manage what we won, and we still can lose nearly everything. I don't doubt that we have some of the best people working for us at this time, yet I would be shaken if they didn't worry, too.

There are tax situations that we have to be cautious about because we will be subject to taxes, and Indian tribes in the contiguous states have suffered because of taxes on fee lands and corporate profits, and some of these have lost all.

Before the settlement, we admitted that we "lacked expertise" in some areas. And later we said that we could "buy

the expertise." But, how far must we go to make sure that our experts are competent?

Do we hire experts to police the experts? Do we trust our consultants? "What did we want to do, and what did we do" is becoming a question for historians. Now, we must ask, "What do we want to do, and what are we doing?"