

Stepovich Suggests State Allow Natives 10% of State Revenue

Mike Stepovich, Republican candidate for governor of Alaska, suggests positive action on the native land withdrawal dilemma.

In an interview with Tundra Times Stepovich expressed concern about the length of time an actual court decision on the land claims might involve. "Maybe fifty years," he said.

Stepovich suggests that the State sign an agreement with the villagers seeking land

rights which would guarantee them ten per cent of all State revenue collected on the land now withdrawn, pending state and federal legislation.

The State has the power to make such an agreement only in respect to its own land, although a similar arrangement presumably could be made with the federal government.

An agreement of this kind, Stepovich added, would be an

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Stepovich . . .

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excellent stopgap until the entire land withdrawal case is settled in the courts.

"I think the natives of to-day should see some of this money—not just their grandchildren," said Stepovich.

In this way, Stepovich feels, the natives would benefit financially now, the State would still have a considerable revenue income, and development of the huge area now claimed by natives could proceed with no further delay.

Objecting to the present State policy of hiring "outside" people for construction in villages where unemployment is rampant, Stepovich said, "They themselves should build, drill wells and construct sanitation facilities instead of people from the outside coming in."

Speaking particularly of the so-called "pioneer roads" Stepovich emphasized that villagers should be given job priority and that the only outside assistance needed in most instances would be a supervisor.

"If the State is going to spend money in these villages, it might as well be going to the people in those villages," declared Stepovich.

Stepovich left this week for a campaign tour of southeast Alaska. His campaign plans at present do not call for a deep penetration into the "bush" areas because of limited funds.