

Editorial—

Tripartite Could Be History in the Making

The recent meeting of the native leaders with one of the United States' highest officials, Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall, may prove to be a milestone in which the first nail was driven toward the building of a justifiable solution to the land problem in Alaska. Udall's spirit of cooperation, as well as that of the State, and the one that was built up among the native leaders was the establishment of a necessary starting point. From this vantage point, this spirit of cooperation should spell that the three-way effort might come closest to producing a land measure that would meet with majority acceptance.

The atmosphere that was created among the three areas of concern did not come about easily. It was a painful road that could have developed into an impasse. It didn't, of course, and thanks to the men who were big enough to do a little soul-searching and come up with a spirit of give and take.

The land question in Alaska is an enormous problem with complexities that baffle men's minds. As far as the

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‘I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend to death your right to say it.’ - Voltaire

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native leaders were concerned, and many of them with limited education, there was something admirable about the way they stood equal to the test. They showed toughness—sometimes with unbending attitudes when they thought that such stands might serve the end results. They stood their ground even in the face of a threatening backlash that was attempted in the process. They hung tough and probably lost a few friends in doing so. They also gained friends and admiration for their perserverance and efforts to gain justifiable results—and all this with unselfish motives in trying to mold a good future for their children and those that will come after them. This is the mark of good leadership, that if their efforts meet with justice in the future, history could well record them as leaders who fought well for their future generations.

There is much work to be done as yet, however, as far as the land question is concerned. There could be knotty areas to overcome. There will be times when our best minds will be subjected to difficult tests but we have confidence that our leaders will rise up to the occasion and that their mental capacities to work for the right will prevail.

All those concerned are in the agreement that there is now a good climate in which to work—that there will be a necessity for compromises. These will be the areas that will require clear thinking and farsightedness. The "good climate" in these areas should prove to be the most valuable asset in arriving at meaningful changes.

It should also be remembered that the Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall intends to go on record as champion of the Indian rights. He also said, that in many respects, the native people of Alaska have been "treated worse" than other native peoples elsewhere. Also, we believe, Secretary Udall stands to be the first Interior Secretary in history to ever undertake the difficult problem of attempting to help solve the land question in Alaska since the Act of 1884.

And there is, of course, the State of Alaska through the concurrence of Governor Walter J. Hickel that has helped to create an atmosphere of cooperation as presented by State Attorney General Edgar Boyko the amazingly liberalized view of the State towards the land claims problem.

The stage has been set for the three-way cooperative effort to draft a land bill that, hopefully, will be acceptable to all concerned. Among many others, we will be watching the deliberative efforts of the tripartite—watching that fairness prevails. It should not come out otherwise because the all-important effort could be recorded as one of the most forward looking milestones in the history of the United States and it could be no less in importance in the history of Alaska.