

Nick Begich: Secretary Morton Appears Uninformed at Testimony

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Interior Secretary Rogers C.B. Morton appears uninformed on what the provisions of the land claims bill he outlined before the Senate Interior committee means as far as land acreage, according to Congressman Nick Begich (D-Alaska).

"He was very indecisive on the land provisions in his statement," said Mr. Begich. "First he thought it came to one million, then as much as 4 million acres."

Begich believes that Secretary Morton presented a plan to the Interior Committee which substantially follows the provisions of the bill submitted in the House by House Interior Committee chairman Wayne Aspinall—but wasn't sure how many acres of land the Aspinall bill provided.

"We figure the Aspinall bill at a maximum of about 88,000 acres of land," said Begich. "It may be as low as 25,000 acres. It's still very, very low."

When he spoke to the Tundra Times yesterday (Feb. 23), Congressman Begich had just re-

ceived official notification of his appointment to subcommittees of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee.

The Congressman was appointed to the subcommittee on

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UNIMPRESSED—Tundra Times' clownish composer operator, Susan Samson appears unimpressed as Alaska's lone Congressman Nick Begich is using her office phone. Begich dropped into

Tundra Times office last week while spending a whole day talking and visiting his constituents.

—MADELYN SHULMAN Photo

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Indian Affairs, the subcommittee on Public Lands, the subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation and the subcommittee on Territorial and Insular Affairs.

The Congressman was especially pleased with his appointment to the subcommittee on Indian Affairs.

"The most important single issue facing Alaska is the settlement of the native land claims. Nothing means more to Alaska than a just settlement of the land claims. The Indian Affairs subcommittee will play an active part in deciding the issue."

"As a member of this subcommittee I expect to make meaningful contributions that will enable the issue to be settled this year."

Commenting on his other appointments, Representative Begich indicated that the Public Land subcommittee formulates policy for the approximately 90 per cent of Alaska's land which is federally owned.

Alaska, he said, contains more federally owned land than any other state. The National Parks subcommittee, he said, will control the huge acreage of national parks in the state, also larger than in any other state.

The committee assignments for the Democratic members of

the House were officially announced yesterday. Republican assignments will not be officially announced till tomorrow.

"We have the smallest subcommittee in the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee," Representative Begich said about the Indian Affairs subcommittee. "It comprises eight Democrats

and five Republicans. The Democrats are by and large very, very good people."

Mr. Begich mentioned that several good friends of Alaska were on the subcommittee and foresaw a great deal of support on the land claims issue from his fellow subcommittee members.