

Homesteaders seek a Governor committed to private ownership

Representatives of the New Homesteaders, a group of Alaskans supporting the Homestead Initiative, have begun distributing Hickel for Governor campaign literature.

"None of the other candidates for Governor is as dedicated to getting land to the people as Wally Hickel," says Jon Maloney, president of the New Homesteaders. "Back in the 1950's, Hickel led the fight to get the 103 million acre land selection provision included in the Statehood Act. He's not new to the land issue."

"This drive for land is the inevitable result of the frustration of the Alaskan people," Hickel says. "Private land ownership has been restricted to less than one third of one percent of the area of this state. First the Federal government, and now the State government, has done everything possible to keep land out of private ownership. It's incredible.

We didn't fight for 103 million acres just to shift this land from a federal bureaucracy to a State bureaucracy. A good portion

was meant to be made available to people, to build an economic base so this would not become a welfare state."

Hickel believes that the Homestead Initiative will pass, and "furthermore, it should pass."

When establishing procedures for land conveyance, the former Governor believes that those who receive the land must be required to use it and care for it.

"This will avoid the abuse of absentee landowners, or those who would merely use the land for speculation," he says. "The purpose is to make land available to Alaskans, especially the young, who at this time cannot afford land of their own."

Some of the initiative backers fear any restrictions placed on the land, because of recent history. Bureaucrats, using the regulation process, have made land ownership so complicated and expensive it has been vitually impossible for a small person to obtain any.

"This is an understandable fear," says Hickel, "and reflects the general distrust the public has of government. But it all goes back to who you elect as Governor. If the person wants the people to have land of their own, they will get it. If he thinks private land ownership is the ultimate lock-up, then they won't."