

'Responsible Job'—

Gravel Lauds Committee for Claims Work

United States Senator Mike Gravel this week said that the Senate Interior Committee was doing a thorough, responsible job of evaluating the proposed settlement of the Alaska Native land claims.

He said that the Committee was reviewing the entire problem with full appreciation of the long term future of the state of Alaska as well as the justice of the claims themselves.

"Any attempt to indicate otherwise does the Committee a disservice and Alaska a disservice," said Senator Gravel.

"The minutes of the Committee meetings will demonstrate," he said, "that the members are most concerned about the economic and social future of all Alaskans, as well as providing justice to the claims themselves.

"I have respected the Committee's decision to keep its deliberations confidential," Senator Gravel said, "because it seemed to me the only way that this complicated and volatile issue could be honestly debated.

"The issue has required considerable discussion and numer-

ous tentative agreements, all of which are subject to change depending upon final shape of the bill. Announcements after each meeting would have given a distorted picture because so many sections of the bill are interrelated.

"No one on the Committee is in favor of secrecy but we are all in favor of moving this legislation along as quickly as possible:

"So far everything we have done is tentative and there will be many opportunities for those most interested in the legislation to comment on it as it goes through the legislative process."

"My effort in the Committee has been directed toward urging as generous a settlement as possible to do justice to the Native claims, and to do this without creating an injustice for any Alaskan, Native or non-Native."

Senator Gravel said that he favors the 2 per cent revenue sharing proposal, "as perhaps the fairest possible way of providing Native citizens with a portion of the revenue from lands that they otherwise would have leased or sold themselves had our laws been different."

He said that an apparent majority of the Committee agrees with Committee Chairman, Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington, that the settlement benefit to the Natives should represent a diversified portfolio of investments—some land, some money, some income for the future.

Senator Gravel said that by writing the 2 per cent provision into the settlement Alaska would likely retain funds that it might otherwise lose through future le-

gislation.

"There is no use kidding ourselves," he said, "the fact that Alaska has received all of its new oil money under highly favorable conditions provided by the federal government will likely change the rules for the future."

"We should anticipate these changes and use some common sense about planning our reaction to them.

"In this context a revenue sharing proposal in the land claims settlement not only does justice to the Natives but is in the enlightened self-interest of all Alaskans."

Senator Gravel commended Senator Jackson for his role in the settlement.

"He has personally labored long and hard and is aggressively committed to producing a speedy and equitable settlement."

"It would be tragic if at this
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point, when we are so close to completing Committee action, if misunderstanding caused either delay or a diminishment of the kind of settlement we have worked so hard to produce for Alaska.”