

Native Land Problems Spurs Hensley to Run for Election

"I believe the Native people are beginning to respect education and this is an opportunity, I think, to make a real

choice in the type of representation they want," said William Hensley.

Hensley is an Eskimo from Kotzebue who filed last week to run for the State House of Representatives from District 17. The district includes Buckland, Kotzebue, Noorvik-Kobuk-Selawik area, Kivalina-Noatak, and Point Hope-Wainwright-Anaktuvuk Pass-Barrow area.

"I do not feel that I can do anything alone—I would not try to do anything alone. I, or anyone else, need the support of the older generation and their leadership as well as the younger people, of course," Hensley added.

He said that the Native people in the area have not been getting effective representation in the past.

"I think they are ready to elect a man who can actually go out and fight for them down in Juneau," Hensley continued. "They are realizing that their area is changing and developing and, I think, they are ready to elect someone who is capable of representing them."

Bill Hensley made a trip to Kotzebue and Nome last week to feel out the political climate in those localities. He said he didn't do much in Nome. He was there to file and to look into the media through which to reach the people in villages.

He attended a meeting at Kotzebue of about 50 or 60 people and talked at length

about politics and the land situation of the Native people in Alaska.

Hensley said on his announcement May 27 that one of his main reasons for entering the political race was the land problems of the Native people.

"We have a unique situation in Alaska in regard to land use, for one thing, and climate and cultures of our people," he said. "I would hope that Native people can get complete title to areas of land which they use and occupy."

"Having control of the land in which we live will allow us to develop at the speed and manner which we can set for ourselves."

"America heretofore," he continued, "has pushed the assimilation of culturally different people into the so-called American mainstream of life without giving those people a choice in the type of life they wish to live."

"The American Indian and the Irish people, for instance, and other groups of people who were culturally different had very difficult times trying to maintain their identity. The essence of a democracy, I feel, is a choice one has to determine the course of his future."

"The ownership of land is part of all this. We'd be able to have a great part in the development of our future

Hensley . . .

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through the responsibilities of land ownership.

"Instead of starting at the bottom with no land ownership, we can start with natural resources that are known to be existing in our lands—we can develop them with the assistance of technically competent people for ourselves, as well as the state as a whole.

"I would like to see our people involved in the making of decisions that affect them. We would be actively involved in the development of our own economy which would also be a great benefit to the state."

Hensley cited the example of the village of Tyonek that has been able to develop enterprises through its own efforts and through the help of technical assistance.

Looking forward to the election, Hensley said:

"If I'm elected, I would be able to devote a great part of my time for the interest of the people in my district. I would be available to be of assistance to any village whenever I'm called upon to do so."