

Thompson Not Running— Ducks State Politics

WASHINGTON, D. C. — (AIPA) — Following several weeks of indecision, during which he consulted with political contacts and friends in Alaska, Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner Morris Thompson has decided not to enter the Alaska primary election as a Republican candidate for the office of lieutenant governor of that state.

Thompson (Athabaskan), who was sworn in as Commissioner on Dec. 3 of last year, declined to enter the primary and explained his reasons for remaining as BIA head in a statement issued May 2 after being mentioned by two of the three Alaska Republican gubernatorial candidates as a possible running mate.

Bristol Bay mayor Jay Hammond and former Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel both had described Thompson as an attractive candidate for the state government's second highest elective position.

"Over the last three weeks I have been approached by friends . . . who wondered whether I would consider filing," Thompson said. He added that he was honored by the invitation and that he considered the offer to be a challenging opportunity.

"Having only recently been appointed Commissioner of In-

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dian Affairs, I have concluded that I must remain here to fulfill the commitment to the post. For me to leave at this time would be unfair to those who have shown faith in me and entrusted me with the responsibilities of this job — unfair to the administration, to the Congress, and to the Indian people," Thompson stated.

Although declining to enter the race, Thompson expressed support for the candidacy of the man who had been his former boss both as Governor of Alaska and Secretary of the Interior. He described Hickel as the "man of the seventies for Alaska."

The offer to enter Alaska politics was reported to have greatly tempted the 34-year-old Indian administrator.

A Hickel-Thompson ticket would have given Republicans strong potential for drawing support from Native voters, who

comprise about 20 per cent of the state's electorate and who have been a deciding factor in recent elections.

The post of lieutenant governor would have also provided Thompson with a good opportunity for a subsequent attempt for the governorship. Timing for a possible bid was also opportune since pipeline construction is expected to significantly increase Alaska's population and lessen effectiveness of Native voting power.

The reasons why Thompson should remain in Washington as BIA Commissioner were also compelling. With five months as head of the Bureau, he has only now been able to fill critical staff level positions in the Central Office and has yet to implement realignment at the agency.

He was reluctant to leave his job before making progress toward his objective of revitalizing the Bureau.