

After Grueling Test—

U.S. Senate Confirms Hickel as New Secretary of the Interior

In one of the most grueling tests for confirmation on the cabinet posts, Gov. Walter J. Hickel of Alaska was approved

by the Senate of the United States yesterday on a vote of 73 to 16.

Gov. Hickel becomes Presi-

dent Richard Nixon's Secretary of the Interior.

Before his approval to become secretary, Hickel had generated one of the most intense controversies over his confirmation by stating that he thought conservation should not be only for conservation's sake; that "What Udall can do by executive order, I can undo."; that the land freeze in Alaska was a "negative thing."

During the process of the hearing for confirmation, Sec. Hickel retracted his statements on the above subjects, the most important for the native people

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Interior Secretary . .

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of Alaska being his concurrence on continuing the land freeze imposed by the outgoing Sec. Stewart Udall.

The four man delegation of Alaska Federation of Natives, Emil Notti, John Borbridge, Rep. Willie Hensley and Eben Hopson, considered Hickel concurrence to maintain the freeze as a signal victory for the native people.

Anchorage Daily News last Saturday printed the following:

"MAINTENANCE of the freeze represents a tremendous tactical victory for the four man team of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) that came to Washington last Wednesday seeking 'clarification' of Hickel's position on the matter before proceeding with an AFN endorsement of the governor. Against tremendous pressure, the group . . . AFN president Emil Notti, and board members John Borbridge, Eben Hopson, and State Rep. Willie Hensley held out, visiting various members of the

committee and consulting with their attorneys.

"Friday, after Hickel's commitment was obtained, Notti and the other members of the delegation took the stand and endorsed the governor's confirmation."

This week, Eben Hopson on his way home to Barrow from Washington, said of the hearing and how Gov. Hickel conducted himself.

"He stood up under it, I thought, pretty good," said Hopson.

Hopson added, "Possibly, we have gained a million dollars worth of publicity on native land claims during the hearing. The press was very favorable to us."

He said Sen. Henry Jackson's Interior Committee was very thorough and calculating.

"Each senator questioned Hickel on one facet of national situation at a time, such as pollution, conservation and native land claims," observed Hopson.

He said that at one point Sen. George McGovern questioned Hickel and then Sen. Jackson picked up the questioning and pinned Hickel down on his position on the land freeze.

"The understanding now is that the land freeze will stay until Congress acts on the land legislation," said Hopson.

He said that the AFN delegation went to Washington "to ascertain certain matters. We went to Washington to ask questions. The endorsement was a secondary matter. We were bothered by certain statements Hickel made before we went there."

"Biggest reasons were those statements he had made publicly," added Hopson. "When he retracted them, we were happy."

Congressman Howard Pollock said the approval of Sec. Hickel by the U.S. Senate was a substantial victory judging from the margin of the vote.