

Lost VISTA Volunteer

And an Old Eskimo

Land's End Village
State of Alaska
September 15, 1973

Dear Howard,

Some of the people here in the village who have been reading the letters in the Tundra Times think that some parts of them are too strong or negative. They think that because I am an old man I live too much in the past. These same people think that Wally Morton, my ex-VISTA friend, is too young and idealistic, so his judgment cannot be trusted. But I believe that we are just being realistic about what is happening to Native people in Alaska.

If you remember, AN ACT (Public Law 92-203) says in the beginning that "there is an immediate need for a fair and just settlement of all claims by Natives and Native Groups of Alaska - Sec. 2 (a). In the first place, the need for a "fair and just" settlement is not only immediate now, it has been for some time. Where was the Congress before there was an oil strike and an energy crisis. The Natives and Native Groups have had the same needs and claims for some time.

In the first letter that I wrote to you, Howard, the problems about the power of the Secretary to make decisions was bothering me. All of the power in one set of hands is not always the best way to make sure that a decision is fair and just. Wally says that an agreement with all of the discre-

tionary power on one side is a pretty one-sided agreement. The Secretary even had the power to decide who was a Native if he chose to do so!

When we look at what has happened since AN ACT was passed, we can see more clearly what these discretionary decisions mean. The Secretary decided not to extend the enrollment for one month, not even for thirty days. The Secretary was going to disqualify most of the larger Native villages as "modern and urban" until Native complaints finally led to the Secretary's lawyers reading the provisions of AN ACT. The Horton ruling on land allotments changed the eligibility requirements for Alaska Natives to claim allotments. Three out of the eight villages left off the Secretary's list of Native villages just happened to be on the pipeline corridor.

In every case Native people and Native Groups spend their time, energy, and money to deal with problems caused by decisions made under the Secretary's discretionary power. The provisions of AN ACT leave so much up to the Secretary to decide that we never know what will go wrong next. Is this what is meant by a fair and just settlement? As far as this old man is concerned it is not really so for Native people.

Your friend,
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