

Editorial—

Significant Milestones

Gov. Walter J. Hickel's performances of late on behalf of the native people of Alaska have amazed us to no small degree. The most notable of these have been his timely interventions when impasse threatened to mire the land claims deliberations as the bill was being drafted and during its difficult course through the State House of Representatives. Each time, his influence as the State's Chief Executive has smoothed over the differences. The significant evidence of this has been the passage of the bill in the House by the near unbelievable margin of 39 to 1. This success can be directly attributable to the Governor.

When Gov. Hickel first assumed his high office two years ago, the native people had little to expect from him. In fact we, along with them, despaired over his utterings toward land matters and things actually began to look somewhat hopeless. But within the period of a year, his attitude began to change. This change was

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"I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend your right to say it." - Voltaire

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hard to comprehend at first but he kept pressing his new approach much to the amazement of all concerned.

Since then, he has said in a down-to-earth manner something to this effect: "I really want to do things for our native people. Honestly, that's true. I'm not against them. That's why I have tried to put natives in our government because they are valuable to us. We can learn a great deal from them because they know the native situation much better than some of us do."

This he has done. That in itself has been an eye opener. We don't think we would be too far wrong in saying that he has set a precedent never before practiced in the state's history.

Gov. Hickel and his Attorney General Edgar Paul Boyko and the native leaders have created a spirit of cooperation never before attained at such a level. This was applied in deliberations on land matters along with the Department of the Interior. This is also a milestone which can pave the way toward quicker solutions to other problems among our native people. This will also benefit the state as a whole by lessening its burdens that weighs it down now by unsolved problem areas.

During the last year or so, we can say that the Governor and his Attorney General, along with the surprising ability of the native leaders to negotiate on difficult matters, have opened a new arena where mutual efforts toward solutions can be realized. This has proven beyond doubt that direct consultations with the native people can bring about cooperative assault on complex matters such as the land claims situation. If this is kept up with respect it deserves, many problem areas can be solved sooner than were thought possible.

As things have shaped up within the very recent past, we see development of Alaska through the course of fairness and cooperation. May this spirit continue in the future so it will benefit all in our unique State of Alaska.