

DEMO PLANK BACKS NATIVES

State Readies Suit Against Rogers Morton

By CHARLES MALLEY

Few Alaskan Natives attended the Central District Democratic Convention in Fairbanks over the weekend, but their concerns were on the lips of statewide candidates for election in November.

Native concern over Secretary of the Interior Rogers C.B. Morton's proposal to withdraw 82 million acres in Alaska as national interest land was buoyed by Gov. William A. Egan's announcement of a state suit against the secretary.

Leaders of Native groups in many parts of the state had warned that Native "input" into the withdrawal proposal was grossly inadequate, particularly regarding the effect on bordering lands.

Now, Gov. Egan says the state will "definitely" file suit, maybe next week, and a primary ground for litigation is that Morton exceeded the 80 million acres allowed for withdrawal under provisions of the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act.

In addition, Egan told an applauding banquet audience at the convention Sunday night that the proposal violates the National Environmental Policy Act and the Alaska Statehood Act.

Assessing the prospect of a favorable court ruling as "excellent," Egan said the lands withdrawn as "National Ecological Lands" and "National Wild Lands" were not within classifications provided under the settlement act.

HENSLEY-PETERSON

Dressed in a white suit, State Sen. Willie Hensley occupied a prominent seat on the dias with

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Democratic District Convention in Fairbanks . . .

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the governor and other dignitaries. The Kotzebue Eskimo is a prime Democratic contestant for the nomination as Democratic candidate for Congress.

Hensley came out in favor of a trans-Alaska natural gas pipeline route. A line through Canada, he said, would not contribute to the development of Native and other lands in the state.

Another Native leader on hand was State Rep. Larry Peterson of Ft. Yukon. Peterson commented in an interview with the Tundra Times on the small number of Natives in attendance at the convention.

Part of the problem, said Peterson, is that the Natives lack expenses to pay for transportation to Fairbanks, as well as room and board for the three-day event. "But," he added, "if

the Democrats don't start organizing people in the villages, the Republicans will do it."

It shouldn't be overlooked that the state's resources are in the rural areas, said Peterson. "This makes rural residents potentially powerful political entities."

With the emergence of Native organizations such as the corporations, Alaska Federation of Natives and the Tanana Chiefs Conference, Natives are rapidly becoming more sophisticated in convention procedures, said the Native Democrat. "They are able to participate effectively."

EGAN

Egan lashed out at the major Republican candidates, charging that they are so busy "dodging around trying to disassociate themselves from that Republican mess in Washington (Watergate) . . . that they have yet to define any real issues."

He blamed former Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel and the Republican state administration for inaction on the Native Land Claims Act in 1970. When Democrats regained control of Juneau in 1970, the Act was "on dead center," said Egan, and it was his administration that got it off dead center.

He credited his administration with progress in education, social services, consumer protection, natural resources planning, land use planning, public improvements, communications and fisheries rehabilitation and enhancement.

Preceding Egan on Saturday, Lt. Gov. H.A. (Red) Boucher cited the Native settlement act as far more important to Alaska's long-run economy than the pipeline. "These people (Natives) are going to play a vital part in the state's economy," he said.

He warned against allowing the pipeline to become a "fixation," but said it should be built with American pride and ingenuity, "... painted red, white and blue and shoved in the Arabs' ears."

GRAVEL

In a Sunday afternoon

speech, Sen. Mike Gravel blamed President Richard M. Nixon for the "eighty-three million acre land grab" in Alaska. The senator said Alaskans can be sure that the Department of the Interior had to go to the White House to get the "necessary okay" for its current land withdrawal proposal.

Gravel promised to hold hearings throughout the state to determine what the "Alaskan plan" is for the use of land in this state. On petroleum, he said there is enough oil in Pet 4, the Naval oil reserve in the Arctic, to supply the entire defense department with fuel for 40 years.

"So the Navy is ready for a 40-year war," he quipped.

Solving the short-run energy crisis is the key to containing inflation — the hallmark of this campaign, said Gravel. Utilizing Pet 4 oil can bring prices down, thus holding off a financial crisis until solar and other sources of energy can be developed, he said.

HAVELOCK

A candidate for the U. S. House of Representatives, John Havelock of Anchorage charged that vital Alaskan interests were being "traded away in secret (gas) pipeline treaty talks with the Canadian government."

He characterized the negotiations as a power play by the Interior Department and its oil industry allies to build a gas line through Canada to benefit

American owners of Canadian gas.

Havelock is urging that a study be given to a gas pipeline route following the crude oils route to a point south of Fairbanks near Tok. He said it might be feasible from that point to have two pipelines.

One would go to Prince William Sound and another on a route parallel to the Alaska Highway to Edmonton.

An accompanying benefit of such a route would be the paving of the Alaska Highway, said Havelock. A Mackenzie River Route, he noted, would have to go through the National Wildlife Reserve in Alaska and would serve only Canadian interests.

Former State Rep. Dick Gruel of Fairbanks is vying with former State Rep. Gene Guess to snatch the Democratic Senate nomination away from Gravel. Espousing action at the grass roots level, Gruel attacked the "trickle down" theory which he charged is the political philosophy of Hickel.

Quoting Hickel as saying the United States must undergo a change in attitude and vision at the top, Gruel said there is no time for that, but "It is time for action at the precinct caucuses, the district conventions and the primary elections."

Gruel received a standing ovation.