

Editorial—

Time Is Now for Honing Native Politics

Political overtones are beginning to tinge the native land claims efforts. Some of the color being splashed around is not meeting with approval in the eyes of the native people of Alaska. That this would come about during the agonizing course of the preparation for the land claims legislation in Congress was a foregone conclusion. We didn't imagine, however, that some politicians and certain newspapers would slap the natives and say they are not the State's responsibility; that they were the responsibility of the federal government.

This is basely ridiculous, shortsighted and also biting to the co-citizens of the state—the native people. We think a concerted effort is in line for the natives to work for better governmental treatment and they can make a good try at it with vigorous politics keeping in mind that influential forces would pawn the state's original inhabitants aside and divest the state of any responsibility to them. This is saying in reality that other 49 states should have the responsibility—not Alaska.

Alaska's native people through their land claims solution efforts by congressional legislation are desperately seeking the stabilization of their status in the State. They are no different from any people in wanting some measure of decency of surroundings where they can live with respect of others. They are steadily being pushed into corners by the tentacles of land hunger. They do not want to be a burden to the State nor do they want to be one to the federal government. A generous land settlement can be an investment they can pay dividends generously in the future.

The land claims efforts were sure to pinch sensitive nerves along the way. The anguished and unfair outbursts are now the results. They should be scrutinized as to which side of the political fence they are coming from even though the individuals who uttered them might be hard to reach by the native vote because of their positions in the political picture.

We are of the belief, however, that urban politicians who are opposed to the native efforts on the land claims can be reached indirectly. Also, we are not ruling out the possibility that the outbursts made lately necessarily originated from those who uttered them but that they could be generated from the higher ups in their particular political organizations. Political maneuvers work in devious ways.

Since politics have made inroads into the land solution effort, it is important that the native leaders sharpen their political viewpoints and work to prepare to influence their people in Alaska generally as to what might be the best road to take in the election year of 1970. That year is fast coming upon us. While doing so, they should make efforts toward a political unity of purpose aimed at the most telling points of action. The native political activity beginning now is an urgent necessity. Its well direct-

ed aims when the time comes can mean better rewards for native causes.

We have long proclaimed that native politics is one of the really effective tools the native people can use to improve their position of respect in Alaska as a whole. Although it is viewed with healthy respect by the state's major politicians, it has never been utilized to its full potential. This must be sought after with vigor. The 1970 election year can be the proving grounds toward realizing what it can really do. The results can be most beneficial and rewarding to the general native effort.
