

Politics Dominant at Annual AFN Conference in Anchorage

Delegates to the Alaska Federation of Natives convention in Anchorage last week left little room for doubt that their support lies with the Egan gubernatorial ticket.

The Democrat received a standing ovation from the estimated 500 delegates as he walked to and from the speaker's podium in Carpenters' Hall. His opponent, Gov. Keith Miller, just seconds before was given a polite applause as he entered and left.

In addition to Egan and Miller, speeches were made by candidates for the U.S. House, Democrat Nick Begich and Republican Frank Murkowski and candidate for the U.S. Senate, Democrat Wendell Kay.

Kay's opponent Sen. Ted Stevens was invited but was unable

to attend.

Beginning about 1:30 p.m. Friday, the speeches all struck on land claims although other issues such as health and education were mentioned.

The positions heard were not new. But, when voiced before a group that has consistently called for a land settlement of 40 million acres, a two per cent overriding royalty, and a \$500 cash settlement, provided some interesting comparisons.

GOVERNOR

Miller: "The question is what compensation should be paid to Alaska's natives for land taken from them by the federal government. The responsibility of settlement clearly rests with Congress, not with the State. That is my position today and has

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been my position all along."

Egan: Attacked what he called a "rigid, unyielding position of the previous speaker" and said "it behooves the State to maintain utmost flexibility in its position."

Miller: In all the discussions on the land claims, "my position has been clear." He charged that during the past four years his Democratic opponent has been silent on the issue and asked why the opponent had not spoken out during that time. He contended that Egan had yet to state his position on land claims.

Egan: Did not outline his position on land claims but said that he, Begich, and Kay have taken basically the same stand. He said that since 1968 he has been out making a living and did not have the financial capability to travel around and make his position known.

He added that, if he had, his efforts might have been interpreted by the Republican administration as an attempt to harm passage of land claims legislation.

Miller: Reviewed efforts of his administration to obtain a land claims settlement and said, "Repeatedly my administration has demonstrated its concern for a settlement that is fair to all Alaskans."

Egan: "As your governor I will approach settlement of the Alaska Native land claims with an attitude for positive action. My efforts will have your best interests in mind and in keeping with my obligations in behalf of all citizens of Alaska."

(Several candidates for AFN statewide offices contended in their campaign speeches that the land claims settlement is not a settlement for all Alaskans but rather is a settlement of the land rights of the Alaska native people.)

U.S. HOUSE

Murkowski: "I am not in a position to state whether 40 million acres is adequate. I feel the question will have to be resolved on a unified position and I don't feel that 40 million acres represents a unified voice of all Alaska."

The unified position, he explained, would require a compromise of all interested parties and would constitute a fair land claims settlement that all Alaskans could be proud of.

Begich: "Land is basic wealth." It is obvious that the 10 million acres provided for in the Senate bill is not sufficient. He did not say whether he supported a 40 million acre settlement.

Murkowski: I do not believe that the State should participate in a two per cent overriding

royalty.

Begich: "I am for an override or some similar participation by the State." The state must participate in a settlement of the land claims issue. This is a federal and state question and "we must join together to solve this common problem. We are trying to improve the life style of a great people."

U.S. SENATE

Kay: The only speaker not faced by his opponent at the convention said that he supported the stand of the State Democratic Party which endorsed the AFN position on native land claims. Specifically, "I do not support a fixed termination date of the BIA and the Public Health Service. Secondly, "I don't think you should have to share your land with Humble Oil Co."

The crowd responded with a round of applause.

Thirdly, "I don't think disputed claims should be tampered with until Congress settles the issue. A law suit is the only thing the State can select before Congress settles the land claims issue."

Egan's running mate, H.A. "Red" Boucher was introduced but made no speech. Miller's running mate, Bob Ward was not present.

Following the speeches, a telegram from Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts was read to the delegates. The Senator sent his best wishes to all AFN members and said "I am with you and behind you all the way."

Sen. Mike Gravel of Alaska also sent a telegram saying that he has worked long and hard to achieve a just bill. "You can count on me in the future as you have in the past."