

Hopson Wants Legislation By Tribes

The executive director of the Arctic Slope Native Association, and former state senator, Eben Hopson, is proposing that each tribe of native people in Alaska make separate land claims for legislation.

Hopson presented his proposal last week at the ASNA meeting in Barrow which some statewide politicians attended.

"To begin with, several tribes of native people filed claims separate of each other, then all

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of a sudden someone came up with the bright idea of pooling the claims into one package and proposed a settlement where, in their present state, would never see the light of day," Hopson told the meeting.

Hopson said that the native people themselves had not really presented their own ideas and those that have been presented have been adulterated by slick compromises by "either the state or the supposed Great White Father to a point of impossible propositions designed to further delay or give the natives of Alaska almost nothing."

He said the natives of Alaska, under pressure from the state government, started off on the wrong foot in presenting the native claims.

"Alaska is a big country, the biggest storehouse in the union, the biggest state of all," Hopson said.

"We lost sight of that fact in the first place. The state government does not know how big it is. Even the federal government representatives supposing to help make a presentation never realized how big it is.

"If they did, they gambled on our silence and to this point have misled the authors of several pieces of legislation proposing a settlement for our claims, Alaska is so big that in order to go from one point to another within the state, it involves international travel."

"I need not remind you that there are definitely several tribes of native people in Alaska," said Hopson.

He said that if the map of Alaska was transposed over that of the Lower 48, "you could, hypothetically, say that if the Eskimos on the Arctic Slope were in the same location as the Indians of Wisconsin and Michigan, the Aleuts would be in the Arizona, New Mexico area.

"The Northwestern Eskimos on the Seward Peninsula would be in the Washington, Oregon and California area; that would put our Athabaskan neighbors in the Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma country, and finally the Tlingit Indians would be in the Florida country.

"So you see, if the Congress chose to make a package settlement for all the Indians in the Lower 48, not one of the tribes down there would ever be as near satisfied, much less be considered as a tribe.

"Each tribe of people, I don't care where, are proud of their heritage and identification. No Tlingit is going to be happy if you called him an Eskimo, an Aleut wouldn't want to be called an Athabaskan, and I know the Athabaskan wouldn't stand being called a Tsimshian, and for your information, I don't like being called anything but an Eskimo."

Hopson said that Congress had set a precedent long time ago in handling legislation for the aborigines; that unless each tribe is considered separately for a settlement, they are not going to be satisfied.

He said the settlement legis-

lation is going to consider each tribe accordingly.

"Why?" he continued. "Because, where do I read but in the congressional record—the daily recorded proceedings of the United States Congress—that on May 6, 1968, on page H3335, the House passed a bill called, 'Authorizing the use of funds arising from the judgment in favor of the Spokane tribe of Indians.'

"That on the same page and the same day, a bill was passed 'Authorizing the purchase, sale and exchange of certain lands of the Spokane Indian reservation,' that on page H3336 on the same day, another bill was passed, 'Granting minerals including oil and gas on certain lands in the Crow Indian reservation, Montana, and for other purposes.'

"Again on the same day, a bill was passed 'Granting minerals including oil and gas

and other deposits on certain lands in the Northern Cheyenne Indian reservation,' to certain Indians.

"That on page H3345 on the same day, an act was passed amending the Act of March 1, 1933 entitled, 'An Act to permanently set aside certain lands in Utah as an addition to the Navajo Indian reservation.'

"And again on the same page and day, a bill was passed, 'conveying certain federally owned lands to the Cheyenne and the Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma.'

"My friends, the Alaska natives are not going to get a package settlement. Each tribe has to be considered for settlement on their own merit and unless we change step now and start legislation rolling in for each tribe, there is no immediate solution in sight," stated Eben Hopson.