

Well Known Legislators Take Issue with Taylor's Gravel Attack

Two well known rural Alaska legislators last week took sharp issue with Warren Taylor, a Fairbanks lawyer, who recently charged that U.S. Senate candidate Mike Gravel had no real interest in native problems and made critical remarks.

Taylor is a supporter of Sen. Ernest Gruening and has previously attacked Gravel. Gravel defeated him in 1964 for the speakership of the State House.

Taking issue with Taylor was State Rep. Willie Hensley, D-Kotzebue, and Rep. George Hohman, D-Bethel, both new young legislators elected to the legislature in 1966.

Adding his voice to that of the two rural legislators was State Rep. Mike Bradner, D-Fairbanks, but who is well known in many villages.

The three young Democrats were strong in their criticism of Mr. Taylor and Sen. Gruening for engaging in "mud-slinging," and resorting to "gimmicks" to influence the voters.

"Mr. Taylor's remarks are inaccurate and meaningless," Rep. Hohman said. "The native people have always recognized that Gravel, who is the author of the regional high school plan, and who recently wrote the essay 'Alaska's Native Poor,' is vitally concerned with native problems."

Hohman said in 1966 more than 70 per cent of the people in his district voted for Gravel.

They did not make a mistake Hohman said, "they met Gravel, they talked to him, and they voted for him knowing that he has a genuine interest in their problems."

Representative Hensley said he was unable to see how Taylor could refer to Gravel's recent campaign as an effort "to deprecate" the many accomplishments of Senator Gruening.

"Gravel has always credited Senator Gruening with past accomplishments where it was deserved," Hensley stated.

"Gravel's campaign has been based entirely on the issues on the next six years and none of it has been negative," he said.

Rep. Hohman said he felt it was unfortunate that Senator Gruening's campaign had been reduced to name-calling and vilification.

"Nobody believes mud-slinging charges," Hohman said. "especially when they come from supporters of Senator Gruening's campaign... I am hopeful Senator Gruening will repudiate these charges immediately."

Representative Hensley, from Kotzebue, took issue with Taylor's charge that Gravel felt native's were "savages" and said he felt that charge was "incredulous."

State Rep. Bradner said that Taylor's remarks in behalf of Gruening were "unethical" and that he attended those hearings of which Mr. Taylor charges remarks were made.

"They were simply not said," Bradner stated, and I guess we might say that Mr. Taylor should stick with the issues and stop throwing the mud.

"Mr. Taylor and Senator Gruening should tell the native people of our State what they have been doing for them these past 30 years, and what they plan to do in the future, and not try to discredit the accomplishments of Mike Gravel."

Hensley termed Taylor's remarks: "...a very unfair and unreasonable statement."

"The truth is we feel Mr. Gravel has expressed a sincere interest, and more important put forth significant efforts in our behalf," Hensley said.