

Young Predicts Worsening Racial Climate in Wake of Claims

By THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.
WASHINGTON, D.C. —
(AIPA) — U.S. Rep. Don Young,
Republican congressman at large
for Alaska, predicts a worsening
of the racial climate in that state
and a heightening sense of politi-

cal awareness among Alaska Na-
tives in the wake of the 1971
settlement of the Alaska Native
claims.

Young, a freshman in the
House and a member of the
House Indian Affairs Subcom-

mittee, told AIPA in an inter-
view here April 23 that awards
of land and money to Natives
in the claims settlement has fos-
tered resentment on the part of
a large segment of the state's
312,000 population.

"The racial climate has been
worsened because of jealousy,"
said Young. "All of a sudden
Natives are the strongest single
economic unit in Alaska, and
there is resentment in this."

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Young Predicts. . .

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The Republican legislator, who is married to a full-blood Athabaskan from Fort Yukon, added: "I have to see people in Fairbanks and Anchorage (Alaska's largest population centers) lumping our Native residents together and speaking of 'those Natives.' I think the bias will level off and that the initial resentment will disappear."

The 40-year-old Alaska representative, who began his political career by winning a seat in the state legislature in 1966 from a district comprised of a number of Athabaskan Indian leader Emil Notti, an Athabaskan, in a special congressional election following the death of Rep. Nick Begich.

Young may face another race against an Alaska Native leader in the November general election this fall. Alaska State Sen. Willie Hensley, an Eskimo legislator from Kotzebue, has announced that he will file in May to run in the August primary against fellow Democrat and former Alaska Attorney General John Havelock. If Hensley is victorious in the August primary he will oppose Young in the runoff election.

Young acknowledges that Natives are "politically conscious" and greatly admires the effort which led to the 1971 claims settlement. "I think that it was one of the greatest coups in the world," he said.

He regards himself as a "producer" and hopes that Natives will evaluate other politicians on the basis of productivity on behalf of Native interests. Giving some insight into a develop-

ing campaign issue, Young said that he is responsive to Native problems and went on record with a statement on the sensitive issue of taxation of Native holdings.

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Young described the proceeds of the settlement as "an inheritance which is non-taxable" and added that "it is morally wrong to tax them." Young also commented on two other areas of concern to Alaska Natives:

— The 12 regional Native corporations created by the settlement act have spent many thousands of dollars in defense of village and regional land selections because of challenges from federal and state agencies: "The Native corporations have spent a large amount of money so far in defending what was already given to Native people because the agencies are jealous. They should be able to get some of that money back."

— An attitude becoming more noticeable among state and federal officials is that the settlement of Alaska Native claims has diminished the responsibility of government to provide services to Natives and rural Alaska villages: "I am scared to death (about reduction in funds for education, health, and other ser-

vices) . . . Congress will make certain that the state doesn't abuse that act."

Young showed obvious respect for the voting power of Natives. He said it was "absolutely" inevitable that the Native vote would be diluted because of the influx of people created by upcoming construction of the Alaska pipeline.

Formidable political power would remain, he added, because of the emergence of powerful Native-owned corporations.

The Alaska congressman was displeased with the activities of groups of Indian militants. "Seizure of the BIA," he observed, "was an unfortunate thing and bothered the people of Alaska. When Alaska Natives agitate for change, they do it within the rules and do it successfully."

Young said he was aware of national Indian problems, as a member of the House Indian Affairs Subcommittee, which would require attention during the second session of the 93rd Congress. He expressed interest in dealing with them. "The biggest concerns we have are in health first, and then education," he said.

The Alaska congressman can sympathize with Indians and Alaska Natives who complain about frequent and tiring trips to the capital for meetings and to lobby the Congress.

For Don Young, a round-trip between Washington and his home district in Alaska is a distance of 10,000 miles and, with 1974 being an election year, November for him is over 230,000 miles away.