

**Editorial—**

# **The Background for Special Consideration**

When members of the board of directors of the Alaska Federation of Natives were in Washington recently, they presented a position paper for consideration by the Senate Interior Committee—the committee that is working on the final draft of the Alaska native land claims bill under the chairmanship of Sen. Henry M. Jackson. The paper dwelt heavily on the uniquely different situation of the Arctic Eskimos. Some of it dealt with their modes of making a living and subsistence. The greatest point, however, was the Arctic Eskimo's deep feeling for their lands of which they have always felt was their own— and the vast riches it contained.

The position paper was a request for special consideration in the land bill for the Arctic people. The request was somewhat late in coming. The Arctic Slope Native Association officials have in the past tried for consideration by the AFN of the unique status of the Arctic Eskimos but with little success. The full impact of it was finally hammered through at the Juneau meeting by an eloquent presentation of Joseph Upicksoun, president of the ASNA. Also witnessing the speech was some of the AFN legal team members including Ramsey Clark, former U.S. Attorney General.

“... Our problem can be stated this way,” declared Joseph Upicksoun in part. “We came into this Federation bringing with us 56.5 million acres, vast riches in oil—enough to provide and protect the security of the United States—enough to require the Congress of the United States to settle the claims of all Alaskan Natives—enough to make the State tax free and enough to make the business community of Alaska and the oil companies rich...”

(Joseph Upicksoun's speech is printed elsewhere on the editorial page: Editor.)

The Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, as does, and will, its counterpart in the U.S. House of Representatives, knows what Upicksoun has said. The appeal was a moving one and an eloquent one. It was, and is, a voice that embraces the true feelings of 4,000 Arctic Eskimos who are seeking justice in the resolution of the land claims, along with their fellow native people in the rest of the State of Alaska.

It is a powerful statement that should not fall on deaf ears. Rather, it should arouse a sense of justice in the minds of those responsible people who are, and will, have a great deal to do with the settlement of the Alaskan native land problem.