

# Political Aspirants in the State of Alaska

By MARILYN RICHARDS

## Eben Hopson

Eben Hopson, though he claims his name is not yet a household word, has proven to be a major power on the Native and state political scene.

Hopson, mayor of the North Slope Borough since 1972, has announced his candidacy in June by challenging Gov. William A. Egan for the democratic gubernatorial nomination.

The Barrow Eskimo regards himself as one of the chief proponents of the land claims movement and a major supporter of local government for the people of rural Alaska.

Hopson, who was the governor's special assistant for Native affairs for two years, calls Egan "insensitive to the social and political meaning of the North Slope Borough and the importance of local government to rural Alaskans."

The North Slope Borough's rights to levy sales, use and property taxes "in the political tradition that began on the American continent thousands of years before the founding of the United States in 1776" was attacked by the Egan administration and oil companies according to Hopson.

Last year both the Superior Court and Alaska Supreme Court decided in favor of the borough. Its boundaries and powers of taxation.

The borough is seen by Hopson as the restoration of the democratic rights of the Arctic Slope Inupiat and as "the beach head for local government and political self determination in rural Alaska." It is also the world's largest municipality.

"It is clear that only strong local government in rural Alaska will prevent the same economic and political exploitation suffered by Native Americans over the past 200 years through the westward expansion of the White American migration," Hopson said.

Speaking at the second Bush Justice Conference held in Minto June 10-12 Hopson said, "Justice for rural Alaska won't be secure until local government is."

"Justice is the product of the quality of understanding and compassion that only locally controlled government can have for troubled people," he added.

Hopson's formal education ended when he finished the eighth grade at Barrow. The white community he said, then numbering less than half a dozen, considered him "uppity" and did not permit him to attend a B.I.A. high school at Eklutna.

After serving in the Army, he was elected to the Territorial House and later the State Senate. He helped organize the Arctic Slope Native Association and also served as executive director for the Alaska Federation of Natives.

port for some sort of position in 1976.

That kind of governor cannot attend to the problems of Alaska," he said. Miller believes his strong point as governor "is to reflect the thinking and problems and concerns of the people of Alaska," — something he said Gov. Egan had but lost.

Miller also criticizes Egan for selling the Wickersham ferry at the height of the tourist season when its replacement, the Columbia wasn't yet on the line.

The sale also affected Alaskan travelers and businesses, he added.

The Anchorage candidate is not wholly convinced about Jay Hammond's candidacy either. "He said something about that he was not sure he wanted the job, but so many people urged him to run he decided to." He added, "Some of his supporters aren't convinced yet he's really serious. I think Jay is approaching it on a totally intellectual basis, without the attendant practicality needed to run the state.

Miller believes he can carry Southeastern, once Egan's power base, because polls show he is stronger there than Egan or Hickel. Anchorage on the other hand is 55-45 Hickel, though Miller is confident about Fairbanks, Matanuska Valley and the Kenai Peninsula areas. Miller lost to Egan in a close race in the 1970 elections.

To improve the quality of life, his first step as governor would be to beef up the Division of Planning and Resources. Its now operating on a day-to-day basis but needs to have a long range goal to operate as it should instead of does, Miller says.

Miller does not favor a capital move, "The costs just outweigh any benefits that would accrue to it."

Miller also supports a gasoline through Alaska, though not necessarily El Paso's proposal, because of the benefits to Alaskans. Though Canada is a friendly foreign country he fears it may want majority interest in the line.

Miller had served in the state house and now is a state senator. Before stepping up as to governor in 1969, he was Secretary of State now the same as the lieutenant governor's office.

taking children from their homes to other homes," and that he said results in culture shock.

Education is not the only issue Libertarians are idealistic about, Baird has what he calls "radical proposals" for land, gold, fishing and the gas pipeline controversy.

He favors opening up Alaskan lands for "legal recognition of private ownership" and is "for another land claims movement for all people."

He also favors the right of citizens to own gold, which he believes would accelerate the Alaska mining industry.

Willie Hensley, the Eskimo Democrat candidate for the U.S. House, said Baird has a view closest to the Libertarians regarding the fishing industry in instituting the propagation and replenishment of fish.

Baird, once a commercial fisherman himself, does not believe in extending the fishing boundary to 200 miles because Japan would threaten to retaliate which would affect America's tuna industries.

"We would wind up with another Russian wheat deal — the Japanese and American governments bargaining "rather than what his philosophy entails, "the individual fishermen bargaining."

Baird said there are 50 Libertarians now seeking national office. Rep. Steve Symmes of

Idaho is a Libertarian but ran and was elected as a Republican said Baird. Tonie Nathan, the Libertarian vice-presidential candidate in 1972 was the first woman to receive an electoral vote.

(More later)