

**Editorial—**

# **Anchorage Land Hearing**

Native land claims hearing in Anchorage on February 8-10 promises to be a very interesting session. The recent upsurge of the claims activities in Alaska will, of course, enter the picture. This effort for solution to land problems has dimmed the glare of the earlier land bills introduced in Congress designed for courts and litigation with a new approach that would avoid such procedures.

A compromise bill has been drawn up through the

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*'I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it.'*

# ANCHORAGE LAND HEARING . . .

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efforts of the State, the Department of the Interior and the Governor's Native Land Claims Task Force Committee based on the suggestion by Interior Secretary Stewart Udall that the monetary portion of the land claims solution be awarded by sharing the income of the United States from the Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas leases and the native people. The idea has met with mutual concurrences of the parties concerned and this might cause the juggling of the earlier land bills and, perhaps, cause them to fall by the wayside.

If such an eventuality occurs, it should be the undivided duty of all concerned to sell the new bill to the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs and to its able and estimable chairman, Senator Henry M. Jackson of the State of Washington.

One of the big MUSTS in the selling job will have to be the proposal to share the Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas monies with the native people and which is, in fact, the central and main meat of the bill. There looms a definite possibility that this might be a hard nut to sell. In the background lies the Bureau of the Budget that is known to look with disfavor any proposal to use the shelf royalties for special purposes and for this reason, legislative efforts along this line have gone nowhere.

The shelf money idea of the bill, of course, is meant to expedite early relief of abject poverty so common among the native people of Alaska. Other alternatives, which will surely be sought if the above idea fails, such as the procedure through the Court of Claims, will be time consuming and which can last for many years and along with it, the prolongation of the misery among the native people.

There is another reason for the selling job. If Congress fails to act on the compromise bill, the cooperative spirit that has been established between the native people, the State, and the Interior Department can fall apart at the seams and along with it, dim the prospects for land settlement in the foreseeable future. Progress that has been gained, painfully at best, can be lost. It could hurt the native people a great deal.

There is a great need for a concerted effort to penetrate the problem areas for proper approaches. Perhaps a means for conciliatory talks at highest levels possible can be asked for to air the urgent need for early relief of the damnable misery of our native people. This should fall as a responsibility for all concerned. To affect penetration of problem areas can mean a brighter future for the state as a whole. Perhaps the Anchorage hearing can be one to pave the way toward a fair consideration by Congress for early solution to land problems in Alaska.