

Claims Progress--

3 Matters of Importance Cited

Congressman Begich (D-Alaska) reported on progress in instituting the provisions of the Alaska Native Land Claims Act.

Citing a report, "Implementing the Alaska Native Claims Act," by Robert Nathan Associates, Inc. of Washington, D.C., Begich indicated that the Administration is making efforts to comply with the Act.

The Alaska Federation of Natives is especially to be commended for providing leadership and exercising the "concept of self-determination."

Three matters of importance must take place before most of the provisions of the Act may be realized.

First, the Secretary of the Interior, Rogers C. B. Morton, must withdraw lands for Federal purposes. This matter has been of great concern to ecology and conservation groups (as well as the Natives, of course). In a letter to Mr. Morton, the Friends Committee on National Legislation highlighted concerns that Alaska Natives be consulted in matters of land withdrawals and pipeline corridors, and that mi-

gratory and nomadic corridors be withdrawn as well.

Second, Congress has yet to appropriate the funds for implementing the Act. This money accounts for the bulge in the BIA budget for FY 1973. The figure has been authorized and hearings have been held, and it is expected to pass Congress.

Third, the enrollment of Alaska Natives has begun. This monumental task apparently is proceeding smoothly.

The Robert Nathan Associates' report indicates the challenge the Alaska Natives community faces: whether Natives "will attain the power and rights of self-government to make decisions regarding its own future." They proceed to outline three areas of caution in planning if the challenge is to be met:

- 1) Native funds must not supplant public services available to all citizens;

- 2) Cooperation of villages and regions is imperative; and,

- 3) Immediate and visible objectives could undermine the long-range goals.