

U.S. READS LANDS BROCHURE

'Deadline for Justice' Brochure on Claims Distributed Nationally

"NATIVE ALASKA: DEADLINE FOR JUSTICE," a voluminous brochure on behalf of Alaska's native people and their land claims is now being distributed nationwide to acquaint the public in general the urgent need for justifiable solution by Congress on the land question in Alaska.

Compiled with dignity and meaning, the brochure was done by Hackett and Associates, a public relations firm in New York. The firm was engaged by the Association on American Indian Affairs, Inc. of New York. The association works for the benefit of American Indians and has a nationwide membership of 45,000.

The frontispiece of the brochure declares:

"The United States and its people are offered a priceless opportunity to do justice to its aboriginal people whose treatment in the past has reflected little glory on our Nation.

"A hundred years ago on the Western frontier, Indians and whites were killing each other for possession of the land. Today in Alaska, sixty thousand Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts are fighting

to preserve their ancient rights and heritage, and to save a fair portion of their lands from expropriation by the State.

"They are waging a peaceful war for a decent share of America's future. Congress is now deciding their fate. The Alaska Native people urgently appeal to the conscience of every American for help in their search for justice.

"Alaska's Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut citizens have conclusive legal and moral rights (original Indian title) to 340 million acres of land—ninety per cent of the Alaska landmass.

"They are asking Congress to grant them formal legal title to 40 million acres essential to their present livelihood and future well-being, and for just compen-

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sation for the remaining 300 million acres they feel are beyond the possibility of saving. Their hopes are expressed in legislation submitted to Congress, and presently pending before the House and Senate Interior Committees."

THE CONTROVERSY

"To the Alaska Natives, the land is their life; to the State of Alaska, it is a commodity to be bought and sold," declares Deadline for Justice. "Alaska Native families depend on the land and its waters for the food they eat, hunting and fishing as they have done for thousands of years."

The brochure points out that the present dispute between the State and the natives has its origins in a century of inaction by Congress.

The State claims the right to 103 million acres from the public domain under a provision of the 1958 Statehood Act.

"The Natives rely on a pledge by Congress in 1884 to respect their aboriginal claims, buttressed by a provision included by Congress in the Statehood Act that subjects the State's selection to their prior aboriginal claims," the brochure declares.

"In 1867," it continues, "when the United States acquired Alaska from Russia, it purchased not the land itself but only the right to tax and to govern. Our Government recognized at that time, in accordance with long-standing Federal policy and Supreme Court precedent, that the land belonged to the original occupants—the Native people of the villages."

The brochure states that Congress in the Organic Act of 1884 establishing a territorial government in Alaska, acknowledged the Natives' right to the land, stating:

"The Indians . . . shall not be disturbed in the possession of any lands actually in their use or now claimed by them."

Congress at that time, however, postponed for future legislation the matter of conveying title to the natives. Congress has yet to act.

"Until the Statehood Act there was no massive threat to Native land rights or their way of life," states the brochure. "Indeed, prior to 1939 the Natives were a majority in Alaska and even today non-Natives use only a minute fraction of the land."

"To protect Native land rights against the new State, Congress provided that the 'State and its

people do agree and declare that they forever disclaim all right and title . . . to any lands or property (including fishing rights), the right or title to which may be held by any Indians, Eskimos, or Aleuts."

"Nonetheless the State subsequently moved to take over lands clearly used and occupied by Native villages and to claim, under the 1958 Act, royalties from Federal oil and gas leases on Native lands."

The brochure continued that the Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management, without informing the villages affected and ignoring the claims they had on file, began to process the State's selections.

The lands of the Minto Indians, where the lakes provide one of the best duck-breeding grounds in the world, were slated to be taken over by the State for the recreation of sports hunters and vacationers.

"The Indians of Tanacross Village were to discover that their lands on beautiful Lake George were being offered for sale at the New York World's Fair as 'Wilderness Estates,'" Deadline for Justice declares.

The brochure went on to explain that the events that took place after the Statehood Act accelerated the formation of native organizations for their common defense against encroachments.

It further pointed out that this newspaper, Tundra Times, a native weekly, was founded to provide a voice for native aspirations.

"In 1964, Indian and Eskimo leaders from across the State met in Fairbanks to mobilize their joint forces; and two years later the statewide Alaska Federation of Natives was formed to champion Native rights," said the brochure.

The brochure continued that in 1966, then Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall, with statutory responsibility to protect the interests of the natives, finally acted to block the State.

Alaska's then Gov. Walter J. Hickel condemned this act as illegal and the State filed suit against Secretary Udall in federal court to force him to continue state selections of "certain Native lands."

This case, now known as State versus Hickel, is scheduled to begin this morning at 9:30 a.m. in the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

in San Francisco.

"The hopes of the Native people gained new force when, in July 1969, Arthur J. Goldberg, former Supreme Court Justice and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, agreed to represent their cause before Congress as a public service. Associated with him in this effort are Ramsey Clark, former Attorney General, and Thomas Kuchel, former U.S. Senator from California," Deadline for Justice went on.

"Ten years ago few Alaskans in position of power recognized the validity and the urgency of Alaska Native land rights. Today the Natives are united and their newly discovered political strength has gained respect for their cause."

The brochure contents include: The Land and the People; The Controversy; The Validity of Native Claims to Alaska Land; and the Terms of Settlement.

The summary declares:

"In view of the Natives' legal rights, their social and economic needs, and the value of the land to which they have rightful claim, the settlement the Alaska Federation of Natives seeks is just, reasonable, and humane. It will afford a wise and courageous Native people a meaningful opportunity for self-determination and the base for a better life for themselves and their children."

"IN ALASKA, the United States and its people are offered a priceless opportunity—and its last real chance—to do justice to its aboriginal people, whose treatment in the past has reflected little glory on our Nation."