

# Interior Secretary Watt visits Alaska

By LINDA LORD-JENKINS

Tundra Times Editor

The federal employee who has more control over the state of Alaska and Alaskan Natives came to the state this week to take a tour that included speeches, a trip to Mt. McKinley and Bristol Bay and perhaps a Native subsistence village.

Secretary of the Interior James Watt arrived in Alaska Sunday and spoke to the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Monday and the Fairbanks Chamber Tuesday.

Although several Native leaders were invited to a Monday night reception in Watt's honor sponsored by Rep. Don Young in Anchorage, those Natives contacted said they had not talked to the secretary.

At a press conference held Monday, Watt faced repeated questioning from reporters asking about his controversial accelerated Outer Continental Shelf oil exploration leasing schedule which has been opposed by state government officials, Native leaders, and environmentalists as dangerous to the delicate eco-structure of the waters off the state.

In response to one question about the united front of opposition to the OCS leasing schedule, Watt said that neither state nor Native leaders he had talked to had any problem with the OCS schedule.

Watt said he didn't remember who he talked to in the Native community and an assistant later named Alaska Federation of Natives executive vice president Janie Leask, AFN Chairman Nelson Angapak, and AFN staffer Don Mitchell as people who Watt had talked to.

Leask, however, said she had never discussed the matter with Watt and in fact hadn't talked with him since the accelerated leasing schedule was released.

William Horn said after the press conference that he (Horn) had met with Oliver Leavitt of the Arctic Slope Region Corp. and no objections about OCS were raised. Leavitt said later he joins with the North Slope Borough stand in opposing the OCS drilling.

"We've always told them that if they back off on the OCS we'd be glad to help open up the Arctic Game Range.

"For us guys in the Slope, we've got no problem if they do

it here (in Cook Inlet). We don't give a damn about the Norton Sound or the Navarin Basin ... that's away from us."

When asked again about Watt's inference that Native leaders had no problem with the leasing, Horn said Watt hadn't talked to the Native leaders about the drilling.

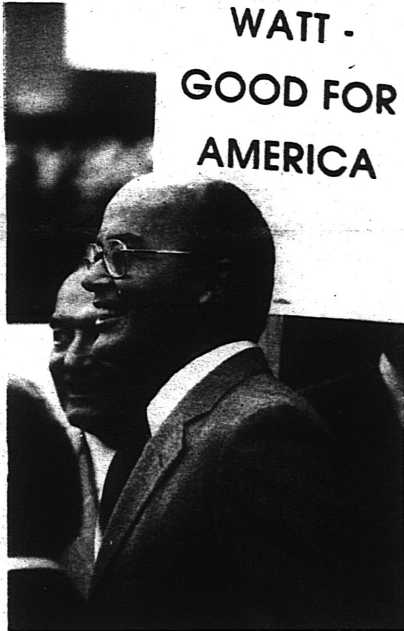
At the same press conference Watt said he received no negative feedback from state leaders in regard to the OCS drilling. If he didn't before Monday, he got a loud and clear message from Gov. Jay Hammond who gave an opening remark before the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce luncheon which featured Watt as a speaker.

In semi-humorous remarks, Hammond criticized Watt's plans for the Bristol Bay area in which has 10 percent of the world's fishing resources. Hammond pointed out that the area is believed to hold only 12 days of oil resources and the governor urged Watt to reconsider his stand.

He presented Watt with a medallion which he said would "self destruct at the instant you sign those offshore leases so I

(Continued on Page Thirteen)

WATT -  
GOOD FOR  
AMERICA



James Watt greets supporters in Anchorage.

# Watt promises common sense

(Continued from Page One) —

suggest you carry it with you always to remind you of the good spirit and will with which you have been met today."

At his luncheon with the chamber, Watt promised a common-sense development in the state and he vowed "We are not supporting blind developmentalism or blind preservationism."

"We will administer the laws honestly and fairly to maintain the balance the American people want, balance between environ-

mental protection and needed resource development."

"We agreed to give top priority to the populations in accordance with the Claims Settlement Act."

He said common sense dictated that "we need to make available some of the vast federal lands in Alaska for mining and homesite settlement."

He vowed that the OCS drilling would be conducted "under strict environmental control."