

Outline of Claims History—

Final Installment on Settlement Series

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SETTLEMENT — PART TWELVE

OLONGAPO CITY, R. P.

Treat everything with suspicion. This is the best time for it. Flood offices with bodies and questions. The administrators may curse the workload, but I'd wager that they would be grateful that their roles were being taken seriously. There are problems that make understanding of the settlement difficult in certain areas. The state and federal governments don't even agree on the intent of portions of the act. That, of course, does not mean that those portions are especially hard to understand. State and federal governments often disagree on a great number of things.

But, we are no longer united as Alaska Natives, other than out of appreciation for the need of associations to protect common interests and provide technical services. The Alaska Federation of Natives and the Alaska Native Foundation meet these needs. For all other purposes, we are twelve distinct regions with separate structures for managing our affairs and distributing and investing settlement proceeds. And there is the possibility that a thirteenth corporation may be formed. Still, it might do us good to remember why we got together in the first place. If we decide that something worthwhile came from that bond, and situations could again require common action, it could be to our advantage to maintain and strengthen

that association.

If this final installment of my series seems to be a sermon, it is because it was intended that way. I thank Howard Rock for allowing me to deliver it. I hope that it causes people to worry and discover questions which might find their way to answers. This format allows much greater flexibility than those straight news stories I used to file in Washington. For that, I am grateful. Accordingly, I wish to make use of it to recognize some of the people involved in the claims fight in a way I was unable to do so before.

I want to thank Emil Notti for his sincerity and wisdom, and for breaking trail to Washington; Don Wright for his determination and for keeping me alert; Etook for his genius and compassion; Dr. James and Anna McAlear for their generosity and friendship and hall closet; Chief Andrew Isaac for his statesmanship; Senator Ted Stevens for his candor and accessibility; Senator Mike Gravel for his staff; John Borbridge for his eloquence; Captain Bill English and Captain Tom Richards, Sr. for demonstrating competence to the Congress; Laura Bergt for rubbing people the right way; Eben Hopson for all his talents; Richard LaCourse for professionalism and friendship; Howard Rock for nurturing the movement and giving me a job; Joseph Upicksoun for speaking from the heart; the Bureau of Indian Affairs for sending us Morris Thompson; Morris Thompson for his friendship and insight; C. Robert Zelnick for his advice; Willie Hensley for his persistence and sacrifices;

Tom Jones for atmosphere; Phillip Guy for showing leadership; Al Ketzler for responsiveness and honesty; Bill Byler for having such a beautiful wife; Alice Brown for her independence; Lefty Weissbrodt for sharing analysis; Mike Rowan for his idea and Irene for hers; Barry Jackson for his patience; Tom and Gil Smythe for aid and advice; John Rainer for leadership; Ruby John for determination and keeping me aware; Congressman Nick Begich for winning one for Alaska; and Pegge for letting him. Those and many others wrote a story which I merely reported. And I wish especially to acknowledge those who began the battle before I was born.

After the first fight was finished, and a second task begun in June of 1972 as millions of dollars in checks were being handed out, Tim Wallis made a quiet statement which I recently found in my notes and kind of like: "In a way, I am sorry that it has passed. It was an enjoyable fight. Perhaps, if it had lasted longer, we might have got more."

I called this piece a sermon, and no sermon is complete without a sample of verse. So, I will close with my own verse, describing this sad victory, which I call "None Before":

"We are to be landlords, he said to us, and we will fight to be landlords, we were told. So we fought to be landlords, and lorded over that which none lorded ever before. I am a landlord, he said to us, and came boundaries over that which none bounded ever before."