

Thomas Kelly Contributing to Divisions by Speeches

Thomas E. Kelly, Commissioner of Natural Resources for the state, is acting as the personification of the faction of this northern country that seemed not to want any kind of settlement in the native land claims. He is personifying the seeming greed for vast wealth of this faction and to heck with the native land needs for equitable resolution.

Kelly, being very new from Texas, can not have too much knowledge of the land situation. He is going along with other newly arrived people in high places, who always seemed to land in highly influential positions, that native claims started when the vast amounts of oil were discovered. No. It is known that claims by natives were made as far back as 1917. Chief Attungowruk of Point Hope, as early as 1875, imposed a demarkation line to keep the white whalers out of his people's accustomed whaling areas. The present land claims situation accelerated when the state, under permission from the statehood act, began to select lands with no apparent thought that some selections it

made would encroach on the ages old hunting areas of the native people. This, perhaps more than anything else, has been the prime mover for the claims.

Kelly is talking that divisiveness among the people of Alaska were being caused by the land claims. He is certainly contributing to this with his speeches he is making in the state to this effect.

It seems that Tom Kelly, and the people who agree with him, are dead set against the land freeze which, in fact, is serving to expedite the solution to claims. Kelly can't wait for another year or so when the land solution might be reached in Congress. Perhaps he might be fanning thoughts among the native leadership on the possibility of litigation to solve the land problem in which case it would add more years of solving the question. John Borbridge, vice president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, said last week:

"These people forget that we are perfectly willing to tie this thing up in court. This is something from which we are not going to retreat. . ."