

**ASNA Attorney Asks—**

# **Invalidate State's North Slope Claims**

In a letter sent to Interior Secretary Walter Hickel Monday, Arctic Slope Native Association attorney Frederick Paul petitioned the Secretary to invalidate the state's claim to North Slope Lands.

Paul further requested Hickel to invalidate leases sold by the state, and to protect the land rights of North Slope Eskimos.

"The Eskimos of the North Slope have a right of occupancy and use to the entire North Slope and have since time immemorial.

"Various and sundry have lately been invading the North Slope and attempting to deprive the Eskimos there of such rights of use and occupancy (which comprehends mineral rights discovered prior to the taking thereof by the sovereign powers of the United States)," Paul said.

Paul stated that such action by Hickel would be consistent with precedent which has been set.

"As has been established by the Tlingit and Haida case of 1968 and the recent study by the Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska, there has never been a taking by the United States, for example, the area which the State of Alaska supposedly is leasing to various oil companies at its sale of September 10, 1969.

"This, therefore, is the request of the Arctic Slope Native Association that you as such guardian protect their rights by ousting the State of Alaska and its leases from possession of any and all lands now claimed by them on the North Slope and such Eskimos will forever pray.

"The form of the within is an open letter to you as guardian for the reason that the Eskimos want the world to know that they are protesting the invasions by the State and diverse other people of their land and to protect them from any estoppel or waiver of rights," he concluded.

The Arctic Slope Native Association, and their attorney Fred Paul, were the subject of much speculation earlier this month at the time of the lease sale.

Many observers thought the strongly unified North Slope Eskimos, as deeply attached to their land as any of Alaska's Native Peoples, would seek to to enjoin the sale at that time.

The petition to Hickel is viewed as an indication that the Eskimos of the Arctic North Slope still remain very much hesitant to consent to wholesale development of their claim area under the guidance of the state—whose ability to protect their land and their land rights is thought by them to be much in doubt.