

**Editorial—**

# **Strange Turn-about Of Secretary Udall**

**"If the State, the native people, and the Interior Department work together, I think we could get a bill. If we don't, we could be caught in a crossfire of an argument in Congress..."**

**"...There should be a three-way compromise, the native people, the State, and the Interior Department. There is a good climate in which to work..."**

**"...I want to give you a permanent stake in your state..."**

**"This is a big, difficult problem and we have to make a big improvement than what we have done before. I am determined to be on the side of the Indians. I intend to get on record that I am the champion of the Indian rights..."**

The above declarations were made by Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall last November in Anchorage when he met with the native leaders who came to meet him from all corners of the State of Alaska. His utterings brought cautious hopes and optimism among the native leaders at the time. One of these was his electrifying statement, an idea that part of the royalties from the oil and gas revenues of the Outer Continental Shelf might be used to pay for the monetary portion of the native land claims.

Prior to the Secretary's visit to Anchorage, Gov-

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*I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it? Voltaire*

# The Turn-about . . .

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emor Walter J. Hickel had established the Native Land Claims Task Force Commission and this Commission, along with the State Attorney General Edgar P. Boyko and Robert Vaughan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior Department, began the exhaustive work of drawing up a land bill. The three-way effort hammered out the S. 2906 which was introduced by Senator Ernest Gruening. The state legislature also hammered out and enacted its bill that largely contained proposals in the S. 2906.

The Secretary of the Interior had gotten his wish that a three-way effort be made in drawing up a land measure. There was even a hearing on the S. 2906 in Anchorage conducted by Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington State and his Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

The greatest portion of the testimonies favored S. 2906 and there was not a word of dissension from the Interior Department during the hearing. This was taken with the attitude that the Department was concurring with the proposals of the bill. So far so good, was the general feeling.

Lately, however, Stewart Udall has made a complete turn-about from his strong plea that a three-way effort be made to arrive at a compromise bill acceptable to all parties. He has drafted a new bill and this bill has completely ignored the efforts of the Task Force, the State and that of his own department. This is a strange turn of events after everyone concerned thought that a three-way working agreement had been achieved.

In his note to the editor of this newspaper, Senator Ernest Gruening said, "In my opinion, the Secretary's action in completely rejecting the work of the Task Force as represented by S. 2906 was arbitrary and completely unjustifiable."

The Secretary's new bill contains such proposals as the 50,000 acres per village contained in the controversial and original Interior bill S. 1964 and which was rejected by the native people of Alaska as "completely unacceptable."

Emil Notti, president of the Alaska Federation of Natives declared last week in the following manner:

"...The Task Force thought it had a commitment and I am sure that many members will consider the new draft a breach of faith by the Department of the Interior, and a breach of faith not only as to the land itself, but also as to the Department's evident intent to maintain permanent control of Alaska Natives, their organizations and business affairs..."

And, too, Secretary Udall may have set the stage and as he said in Anchorage, "we could be caught in a crossfire of an argument in Congress."