

UAW'S REUTHER BACKS CLAIMS

Walter Reuther Also Nods to 2 Per Cent Royalty Proposal

The growing support behind Alaska's native land claims now includes Walter P. Reuther, President of the International Union (UAW).

In a letter in December to Sen. Mike Gravel of Alaska, and other members of the Senate, Reuther urged "to fully attend to the resolution of the Alaska native land claims issue with a view toward justly, generously, and finally assuring these native peoples a solid base of economic security and growth."

Significantly, Reuther also supported the 2 per cent royalty as proposed by the Alaska Federation of Natives as a share in revenue.

"Most importantly," Reuther stated, "we believe that a percentage of revenues, in perpetuity, from land development in Alaska must be the basis for Native participation in Alaska's future economic development."

"The experience of the 'lower 48' states makes it clear that a nation or a state cannot prosper if its minority citizens are not full participants in its growth and progress."

Reuther said that today in Alaska, the Congress of the United States has an opportunity to provide for the future welfare of 60,000 native Americans in a way which permits them to develop and prosper as a people and a culture, and which would permit the U.S. Government to take pride in its treatment of a minority who have a long-standing claim to their country's land and resources.

"The Alaska native land claims bills," he said, "now pending before the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee provide that opportunity. A generous monetary and land acreage settlement would provide the Alaskan natives with a sound economic foundation for their future progress."

Sen. Gravel acknowledged Walter Reuther's letter with a letter of thanks of his own.

"I consider the land claims the most important piece of business to come before the Congress in many years affecting Alaska, perhaps the most important bill since the Statehood Act

Reuther

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itself," said Gravel.

"And for the people directly involved, the terms of the Land Claims settlement will affect their lives for perhaps a generation or more. It is the last opportunity that the United States has of settling a claim with a segment of its aboriginal people on terms that will help those people find a realistic foothold in the twentieth century.

"I am confident that your letter will be of great assistance to us and I deeply appreciate your thoughtfulness in becoming involved in this issue."

Support from the Lower 48 Indians has also been growing. The forerunner of this support has been the National Congress of American Indians that has called for the backing of the AFN bill.

Another important group is the United Southeastern Tribes, Inc. with the membership of Miccosukee, Cherokee, Seminole and Choctaw Indians. There are also others.

Of great significance is the backing of the AFN is the National Council of Churches which during its Triennial General Assembly in Detroit, Mich. recently voted unanimously to support the native federation.

The national council has around 46 million individual members throughout the nation.