

Hopson Says Local Gov't. Security for Justice

MINTO — Democratic gubernatorial candidate Eben Hopson says justice for the people of the Alaskan bush won't be secure until local government is secure in rural Alaska.

In an address to the Second Conference on Bush Justice at Minto June 12, the mayor of the North Slope Borough spoke critically of the present state local government controls in Alaska.

"All of you know down deep in your heart that justice for the people of the bush won't be secure until local government is secure in rural Alaska," Hopson

said. "For justice is the product of the quality of understanding and compassion that only locally-controlled government can have for troubled people.

"It should be clear to everyone by now that the only government that you can trust to care about justice is locally controlled government — government administered by people who have to look you in the eye; who have to live in the same town as you; who depend upon the same justice as you do," he said.

Hopson said that "America is a land of local government; 'lo-

cal government guarantees freedom and justice everywhere in America — everywhere except in rural Alaska," he said.

"But we've come a long way . . . really.

"We can remember when Walter Hickel sent armed troopers to Bethel to prevent Eskimo fishermen from selling their fish to buyers who offered to pay more than Seattle buyers. We can remember when Keith Miller and his attorney general, C. Kent Edwards, and his commissioner of Natural Resources, Tom Kelly, led the organized opposition of the state of Alaska to block a just settlement of the Native Land Claims.

"We can remember when Attorney General Edwards was almost disbarred when he unethically interfered between Alaska Legal Services and their client, Stevens Village, when the people of Stevens Village wanted to go to court to force the oil industry to live up to their agreements," Hopson said.

"We can remember all this only too well," Hopson continued.

"G. Kent Edwards is our U.S. Attorney for Alaska, the senior employee in Alaska of Richard Nixon's Department of Justice, and Senator Ted Stevens has told us that he has asked Richard Nixon to appoint Edwards to become our U.S. District Court judge for the rest of his life.

"Don Young, Edwards' confederate in the infamous Stevens Village affair, is now our U.S. Congressman, a man who dismissed the Watergate scandal as 'much ado about nothing.' Keith Miller and Walter Hickel are running for governor, and Tom Kelly is dealing Native-owned oil lands on the North Slope. Our enemies grow older and prosper," he said.

But Hopson, former special assistant to Gov. William A. Egan, says that from his vantage point in the governor's office he began to see "that Egan wouldn't do any more about our problems in the bush than did Hickel or Miller. We got lots of sympathy from Egan, but no action," said Hopson, who is running against Egan in the gubernatorial primary.