

Anti-Indian backlash is developing

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Alaska Natives have had a hard time convincing some non-Natives that the land claims settlement act was not a rip off of white interests, but a way of protecting Native rights.

According to reports filtering into Alaska through various news reports, Native people in the Lower 48 have a similar problem. According to these reports, Natives are winning more and more court cases confirming land, water and civil rights, and non-Natives are getting more and more uptight about it.

This growing anti-Native sentiment was reflected in elections last fall when Lloyd Meeds, U.S. Congressman from Washington, a long-time supporter of Native causes, nearly lost his seat. It is reported that Senator James Abourezk, a Democrat from South Dakota, will not seek re-election again because constituents are angered by his

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pro-Native views.

The latest report on white backlash to Native claims comes from Gordon Jackson, Alaska representative to the National Congress of American Indians. Jackson serves on the Executive Committee of the NCAI, which

met in Washington, D.C. on March 18. In memorandum to Alaska Federation of Natives President Byron Mallott, Jackson said:

"Our discussion was basically centered around the U.S. Congress and how bleak the situa-

tion appeared to be for American Indians."

Apparently, the U.S. Senate looks favorably upon Indian issues.

"However, in the House many congressman are reluctant to involve themselves with Indian issues due primarily to the near defeat of congressman Lloyd Meeds . . . once a champion of Indian affairs," Jackson said.

But that's not all.

Anti-Indian Lobby

A new organization has incorporated, opened a Washington office and "their sole purpose appears to be 'anti-Indian.'"

The name of the group is the Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities. According to Jackson, the group formed in South Dakota with 200 members and soon swelled to more than 3,000 members in several states. And they all have the same gripe: recent Indian land victories in the courts and in Congress.

"In Washington, D.C., you now have Indian vs. Anti-In-

dian organizations lobbying, with the latter being the strongest financially. The NCAI has been advocating that Indian tribes and tribal organizations realize this strong force and begin to provide more financial resources to the NCAI. If they don't, the Interstate Congress, already a significant lobbying force in Washington, will kill all we have worked so hard for the past several years," Jackson warned.

Work With NCAI

Jackson urged the NCAI leadership to set up a plan that would allow tribal organizations across the nation to buy lobbying and communications services from NCAI. This would provide money to greatly increase the present NCAI Washington office and improve its effectiveness.

Under such a plan, Jackson said, the Alaska Federation of Natives would pay the salary of someone in Washington to monitor Alaskan issues in Congress. This person would work out of the NCAI office and AFN

would pay part of the cost of maintaining the NCAI office.

Jackson suggested AFN could save a lot of money because the plan would be less costly than AFN opening its own office. Jackson added that the \$15-10,000 AFN spends yearly to travel to Washington to deal with certain problems might be better spent maintaining a full-time person on Capitol Hill.

Jackson urged Mallott to consider the plan, "I hope the information is useful to you and must re-emphasize the need for a Washington, D.C. office. The Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities has considered financial resources and Indian tribes are feeling the adverse effects of their lobbying every day in Washington."

Jackson told the Tundra Times, "It's kind of scary."