Editorial—

Are Claims Clouding Non-Native Land Titles?

In his speech on Native land claims last Tuesday, one of the first things Governor Walter J. Hickel pointed out was the clouding of titled non-native lands if those lands were located in native claims areas.

The statement smacked of being made to cast a "cloud" over the land ownership by the non-natives. This would have been radily acknowledged by anyone if non-native land owners all had "tentative" titles. Since great many of our non-native friends have patents on their lands, we doubt very much that their patented properties would be affected by native claims. The same is true in the case of those lands the State has withdrawn so far and patented under the provision that the state government has the right to withdraw 103 million acres of the so-called public lands.

The patented lands, whether State or private, are legally recorded and it is very doubtful the native people can do anything about them except obtain compen sation from the Federal Government. Furthermore, it seems quite clear that there would not be roadblocks to prevent development of legally patented lands.

Governor Hickel seems to be adding fuel to the negative publicity that was launched by W.C. Arnold in his treaties on native land claims and in which he strongly stated that the claims would seriously retard the development of Alaska. This publicity has been well thought out and skillfully dispensed, so much so, that it is beginning to create a backlash against the native people who, as original inhabitants of Alaska, are experiencing and have experienced for centuries an ominous cloud over their rights to the lands.