

Editorial—

The Enrollment . . . Sooner the Better

The native land claims settlement will not come about immediately but the pace that has been set towards its solution is very much evident at the present time. Although it may, or may not, accelerate the people working toward the solving of it are progressing at a pace that has been surprisingly swift. Barring major obstruct-

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ions, the settlement could come in not to distant future. If it does, the relating factors, if not done in an expeditious manner, could delay the implementation of the final solution and one of these is the enrollment of the native people involved.

The Alaska Federation of Natives is now undertaking the enrollment of the native people of Alaska. This is going to be a big job, if not a monumental one, and slow response by our people at the initial stages could delay the implementation of, say, the distribution of the money realized from the land claims settlement. Whatever final deliberations will decide, there could be possibilities that some of the revenues might be distributed on per capita basis or based on each person enrolled. At any rate, the roll will play an important part in determining what persons will qualify as recipients.

We should, perhaps, take note and learn from the experience of the Tlingit and Haida people in their enrollment effort for the judgment money expected through compensation for extinguished lands resulting from the creation of the Tongass National Forest in Southeastern Alaska. Although we stand to be corrected, we believe the Southeastern Indians started the job two or three years ago with a deadline set but this had to be extended once or twice. We also recall that they expected to enroll nine to 12,000 people but the list has now exceeded 17,000. Those responsible for the enrollment found that the work was a hard one as well as time consuming.

Correspondingly, the AFN effort to enroll the major portion of the native population of Alaska is going to be a difficult one. If we may hazard a guess, the number could exceed 50,000. There could be several thousands more living outside of the state and this number could swell the total to 70,000. Anyway one looks at the undertaking, it will be a huge job.

The native leaders in each community in Alaska should urge their people to enroll as soon as possible. We would rather see AFN office in Anchorage swamped to its every nook and cranny with enrollments than to have it waste time waiting for enough names to work on. We don't even give a hoot whether AFN President Emil Notti swims in roll envelopes up to his neck. He'll find ways to expedite the listing of the roll. Persons can begin the swamp job by writing for enrollment forms, or blanks, to Alaska Federation of Natives, Box 3408, Anchorage, Alaska 99501. They can also call the AFN office for them at 279-2622.

Here in Fairbanks, the forms are available in the Tundra Times office, Chena Building, 510 2nd Avenue, Room 220. If the office is threatened with a swamp job, the editor is prepared to holler for volunteer help so the staff can continue to publish the newspaper.