

Mike Gravel Hits BIA, Calls for Claims Backing

SITKA—United States Senate candidate Mike Gravel said during a campaign trip to Sitka this week that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has outlived its usefulness and its functions should be transferred to the states.

"I favor less federal control and more state control of affairs within the various states," Gravel said.

"Individually there are many fine and dedicated workers in the BIA, but the whole concept of the agency is out of date with the times.

It's like running an old, obsolete ship with a good crew—it can't be done."

The BIA's policy of conducting segregated schools is just one example of how it is operating contrary to prevailing American opinion, Gravel said.

"No one—and least of all the Indians in Alaska—benefits from this outmoded, antiquated educational concept," he said.

"The BIA has failed in its major function of making

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Indians self-reliant."

"The agency acts like the Great White Father," he said, "and its paternalistic, father-knows-best attitude is weakening rather than strengthening individual initiative among natives."

Gravel suggested that the country, and the natives of all the western states where the BIA is active, would be better served if the BIA phased itself out of business and the federal government channeled the money now being filtered through the BIA directly to the states.

"I believe less government is best government," Gravel said, "and this is one way of reducing costs and improving performance in an area of vital concern to all Alaskans."

On his campaign swing through Petersburg, Mike Gravel disclosed a bold plan to present a united front to the federal government for Alaska land claims.

"It is wrong," Gravel said, "to consider the land claims now under consideration as 'Native Land Claims.' All Alaskans will benefit when these claims are settled. For any Alaskan to oppose settlement of the claims is economic short-sightedness."

"Every resident of Alaska, regardless of race or color

or origin, will reap some profit from the land claims. The objections to the claims, in almost every case, are based on misunderstanding, misapprehension, or mistake.

"We all know that Alaska suffers from a serious shortage of investment capital but there is one asset we do have: land, and the bulk of our resources and our hope for the future lie above and below that land."

What settlement of the claims will do, Gravel said, would be to increase the statehood selection of land

by millions of acres.

"The only difference," Gravel said, "is that the land goes directly to the people of Alaska and not to the state."

"Along with the land, the federal government will allocate part of the cash settlement in development dollars which will provide funds for villages and rural projects."

"These are dollars we never would have seen had the natives not pressed their land claims."

"This means economic benefits for all of us. It

means that our native people no longer will be wards of the federal government. It means a gradual elimination of welfare dependency passed on from generation to generation. It means a stronger native people, and it encourages investment of federal dollars in rural Alaska.

"This in turn means private ownership of land by natives and the beginning of private enterprise in the villages."

"I urge all Alaskans to stand united on the land claims and help get these claims settled quickly and equitably because we all stand to benefit when they are settled."

Dr. Thomas Billings, national director of Upward Bound, has reported that almost 80% of all Upward Bound graduates have gone on to college, and 76% of this year's freshmen group were in "good standing" following mid-term examinations.