

# Gravel Pushes for \$12.5 Million-

## Also Hints He Prefers Private Carrier Over North Star

FAIRBANKS—Senator Mike Gravel said Friday that he would appear before a preliminary hearing in Washington, D.C., today to give testimony on the need for Alaska natives to get an advance on the \$12.5 million yet to be appropriated as part of the claims settlement.

"We've got to be on top of it," he said, adding that without an advance payment, Alaska natives cannot expect to receive money from the federal government before late April or early May, depending on how soon

the appropriations bill gets through Congress.

Gravel made these statements at a hastily called news conference at Fairbanks airport when he was delayed 45 minutes here between planes. He was on his way to the Anchorage Fur Rendezvous.

Now that native Alaskans have voiced their displeasure at the prospect of having the North Star III removed from Alaskan waters, has he changed his position on the North Star III?

(Earlier Gravel had told the

Tundra Times that he had asked the General Accounting Office to conduct a study to determine whether or not private carriers could give better service to Alaskan coastal communities now serviced by Bureau of Indian Affairs supply ship North Star III.)

"I think we could get a better deal with a private carrier," Gravel replied. He had been informed, he added, that the GAO study bears his feelings out, but "if it doesn't," he said, "we shouldn't change. If it does, I

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would like to see a change," he said.

How close is Alaska to being part of a satellite communications system?

(In Fairbanks in January Gravel had said he was to meet with federal officials to try to get the Federal Communications Commission to issue a permit for a satellite system that will include Alaska.)

At his meeting with federal officials, Gravel said, he had discovered that neither the Air Force nor Radio Corporation of America are at fault in a delay on a satellite system. "FCC is delinquent," he said.

"I wrote a letter to Dean Birch (head of FCC)," he said, but have not received an answer. FCC has yet to nominate a contractor for the domestic satellite system" even though "they promised last summer that this would be done before Christmas."

In this way, Gravel said, FCC is "holding up money that would be spent by RCA in Alaska. Sixteen villages are all wired up with communication equipment just waiting for FCC to grant RCA permission to operate," he added, "and there will be an additional 26 villages with equipment installed by RCA."

On other matters, Gravel said that he wanted to make it clear that there is "no foundation" to the charge that he is spending all his time campaigning for Senator Ed Muskie for president instead of working on "Alaska's business."

People should understand, he said, that he is "doing Alaska's business, and it's a painful process," when he is campaigning for Muskie.

Alaskans don't relate the congressional delegation's accomplishments," he said. Laws that are good for Alaska, he said, have passed Congress only to be vetoed by President Nixon.

"The best job can be done for Alaska by getting someone in as president who won't veto these laws," Gravel said.

He is devoting an entire newsletter to this, he said, not only including information on the

bills the president has vetoed, he said, but also on \$12 billion that Congress has appropriated and the president "refuses to spend." This "affects every facet of the federal budget," Gravel asserted, including "bush airports and hospitals."

He cited an accelerated public works program and an economic development act as examples of legislation that the president vetoed.

And, he said, it took two years before Richard Nixon decided not to veto the Emergency Employment Act. Muskie, Gravel said, was the architect of this law. It will create 140,000 jobs in the United States.

"We're just beginning to see these jobs created," Gravel said.

How can he campaign for Muskie when Muskie has taken a stand against the Trans Alaska Pipeline?

"I question those who are quick to slam Ed Muskie" on this, Gravel said. President Nixon, Gravel had said earlier, will not come out for issuance of the permit to build the pipeline with the presidential election coming up.

"I have more of a chance of changing Muskie's stand on the pipeline," Gravel said, "when and if he's elected president rather than if I work against him or not at all."

Muskie, Gravel said, will have the democratic nomination for president "all locked up by the first of May."

Muskie will win in New Hampshire, Gravel predicted, come in first or second in Florida, and will win in Wisconsin. "After those victories," Gravel asked, "how can anybody get the money to run against him? He will take the rest of the Primary by default."

Senator Gravel also said that he does not miss "important votes" in Congress to campaign for Ed Muskie.

"I travelled all the way to Washington, D.C. two weeks ago just for one vote," he said, but "when no critical votes are demanded of me, I make an effort to campaign for Muskie."