

**Editorial—**

# Those Who Stood Up and Be Counted

"One thing I have noted with some regret is the interest that has been lost in the people who fought hard and, at times, painfully to bring the claims issue to a head. They took the unpopular stand and did so without praise and with a great deal of courage."

Dean Williamson, who formerly lived and worked in Fairbanks and who is now living in Everett, Washington, voiced the above statement. The statement may strike the chord of nostalgia among those men who battled for the recognition of the native land claims situation in Alaska but who would not come out and say they wanted praise for their efforts. Without the thankless job they undertook, however, we doubt that the progress toward solution attained so far would have been possible even though the resolution of the claims has not yet been affected. That progress toward solving the complex land matter has been made is without question.

It was not an easy thing to dare to disturb the slumber of the 100 year old stalemate that had been stamped with an attitude of "Let the sleeping dog lie." It was a fearsome giant that no one seemed to dare to awaken. It meant serious conflicts because the main ingredient of the problem was land—the lifegiving element even the prehistoric men treasured as a precious possession necessary for their survival.

Those native men who dared to revive the need for land solution in Alaska met with opposition often generously infused with derision. Profanity was not an uncommon occurrence they have had to meet. They were challenged to fight for the land to see who would get it. Stinging epithets were many times encountered. The men held on tenaciously and in the long run sometimes gained the help of those who opposed them more thoroughly. They stood resolute and withstood heavy pressures. They fought to see the times when the nation at last recognized that the native people of Alaska had the moral right and the legal right to fight for their lands.

"If you were to list the names it would take more paper than I have," continued Williamson, "but some of the people I no longer hear about are of course yourself, Andrew Isaac of Tanacross, Peter John of Minto, Andrew Demoski of Nulato, Benedict Jones of Koyukuk, Ralph Perdue of Fairbanks and Sam Taalak of Barrow. The list could go on and on but the point is—the movement and issues really began in the north with the leaders of the north."

The list could go on and on indeed.

"I hope that when you write the history of the claims," Dean Williamson concluded, "You include those who had the raw courage to stand up and be counted when it wasn't a popular thing to do."