

Age of Reasoning, Questioning Come to Natives, Says Writer

An all time low has been reached by those, who in a great measure seek to control the future destinies of Alaska native peoples, by the most recent proposals of Senator Gruening to the department of Interior.

He, by his statements, is proposing to settle these claims by giving the native people certain things they already possess by law.

To be specific he proposes to:

"Bestow title to townsites upon these people." Where, it should be asked of him, did the people of Barrow and Point Hope (to cite two cases) obtain title to their present townsites from? The law in effect now, where else?

"All natives should be given the right to file on 160 acre claims." This too is already a law of the land, and under which many natives have already exercised their right to do so. In fact the Honorable Senator quotes repeatedly the specific law in one of his books, in the chapter dealing with Alaska native rights. He cannot be so naive as to forget this.

How culpable does Senator Gruening think the Native population to be, when such an offer is made?

Would he give us something we already have?

His words and proposals place him directly in alliance with the thinking of past generations who in effect said, "Yes this is the Land of the Dakota, the Sioux, the Cheyenne, but we feel he has no more use for it, "he stands in the way of the progress so we will move him to a reservation and restrict him to it."

But now Senator Gruening would reduce the size of a reservation to a townsite. A reservation by any other name but a reservation nevertheless.

It is high time some of the candidates now running for office come out with some definite favorable proposals regarding native rights, or is it to be presumed by the native population that there is NO white man amongst them who is willing to help carry the burden of their fight for just settlements? And a just settlement hardly includes giving a man something he already possesses.

Senator Gruening further proposes some sort of tribunal to settle these claims. Again he proposes a substitute for something already adequately covered by existing laws, and under which settlements of Native Rights elsewhere have already been made. Now let us ask why he wants to set up a new method to deal with these cases? It is because under the present adequate laws and courts available the courts have almost without exception found "for" the native. And he doesn't like that.

True, Senator Gruening has done some good things for the Alaska natives, but he should not consider them to be like the faithful dogs who having been given a few pats and kind words remains wagging his tail, while his master swings a few well aimed kicks at his head.

No, Senator, the native people have begun to grow up, even as you have grown old, and what they would accept gratefully without question forty years ago, they will not do so now.

The age of reasoning and questioning has come to the native and he is no longer gullible to the point of allowing somebody to give him something he already possesses.

To add further to the discussion, in that the land claims have now become international by the Chalkyitsik filing and

(Continued on Page 7)

Age of Reasoning . . .

(Continued from Page 2)

the Eskimo claims could very well be made so too, it may be that, in that ethnic ties transcend international boundaries, the whole thing would be more properly settled by an organization such as the United Nations.

A far fetched thought? Not at all. The precedents for such cases have already been established before that international body many times over in the past fifteen years. It is almost certain that countries having been liberated so recently from the status of the white men's colonies would be entirely sympathetic to the native cause and to justice for them.

It will be much better for all concerned if foolish proposals such as the Senator's are overlooked and serious, just and impartial reasoning takes over.

—Hugh Nicholls
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