

# Reginald Heber Smith Fellows Back Claims

## *Fellows Members Specialize in Indian Laws*

Reginald Heber Smith Fellows assigned to Legal Services Programs, which work mainly with Indians, met last week in Denver, Colorado, to discuss special aspects of Indian and poverty law. The Fellows work with Legal Services Programs which serve Navajo, Sioux, Blackfeet, Cherokee, and Crow Indians, in addition to Alaskan Indian, Eskimos, and Aleuts.

One of the most significant results of this meeting was an endorsement of the Land Claims

Bill as proposed by the Alaska Federation of Natives.

The Smith Fellowship Program is funded by the Legal Services branch of the Office of Economic Opportunity, and is a year-long program directed by the University of Pennsylvania focusing on development and analysis of emerging legal principals and remedies. The Fellows meeting in Denver were all attorneys with several years' experience in the specialized field of Indian Law.

The resolution finally adopted by the Smith Fellows closely aligned itself with the AFN position calling for the confirmation of full legal title to 40 million acres of land in Native peoples, and the payment of \$500 million dollars along with a 2 per cent overriding royalty. The resolution was adopted only after lengthy discussions dealing with the case law and principles which establish a claim to aboriginal title, the legal principle upon which the Land Claims issue revolves. The lawyers specifically recognized the legal right of the Alaskan natives to their land and to their monetary compensation.

Although the support for the resolution was unanimous, several of the Fellows questioned whether the land portion of the settlement was sufficient. This concern was based on the fears that the 40 million acre figure would not be sufficient to sustain a subsistence economy and that therefore the figure represented a decision against the continuation of a native subsis-

tence culture. A question was also raised as to whether the title to the native lands would be tax protected.

The Fellows also heard news from the Alcatraz Indian territory from Joe Bill, originally of Hooper Bay, Alaska, who is a resident of the island and a member of the Alcatraz Council. Mr. Bill indicated that the island is being held under an Indian Treaty which gave Indians a preferred right in governmental surplus property, such as Alcatraz. The island also is the site of an ancient Indian burial and spiritual ground.