



AFN PR MAN—Jim Thomas, director of the Alaska Federation of Natives public relations, is delivering his speech on, Claims Today—"Now" Tomorrow, to the audience at the Duckering Building at the University of Alaska last week. The speech was well received. Jim Thomas de-

lighted a large audience as a co-master of ceremonies at the Tundra Times 7th anniversary banquet on October 5 in Anchorage. Thomas is a Tlingit from Yakutat.

—ROBERT KOWELUK Photograph

AFN PR Man Talks

Jim Thomas, director of public relations for the Alaska Federation of Natives, last Friday spoke at the Duckering Building at the University of Alaska and dropped a hint that might be thought about by more than a single person in the state.

Thomas spoke about the Alaska native land claims to the audience predominant with native college students and a number of professors.

"I sometimes wonder," Jim Thomas said, "how much oil leased lands are involved in the fear which grip those people who so strongly oppose the land claims settlement. Is there the possible fear that they may give up rights to lands which have become a mite illicitly theirs."

Thomas told the audience that for many of our natives, the legend of the first coming of the white man was only some 80 years old.

"And yet, we're expected to assimilate into the new society of Alaska with nothing of the economic basis employed by that society."

"Progress," he added, "of any nature for a government of any

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Jim Thomas Speaks to Native Students . . .

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kind, be it a native culture, the State of Alaska, or the federal government is completely dependent upon one common factor—clear title to land.”

Jim Thomas told his audience that the native people were now involved in a complicated request for justice.

“We shall give up title to gain title,” he said. “We fight now, for the right of all Alaskans to have clear and satisfactory titles to land, regardless of size.

“Consider these questions:

“—How many natives can you name who can borrow from a financial institution using clear land title for collateral?

“—How much more land can the State of Alaska lease with a clear unclouded title?

“—How much more land and how soon can the federal government convey to the State of Alaska for development?

“Here lie the problems of our state: the immense desire for progress.

“The problem must be solved, and it cannot be without the settlement of title with us—Alaska natives—the first owners of the land.”

Jim Thomas said everyone in this state desires to be caught up in the whirlwind of progress now just hovering off our shores, held out there by a cold front known as the land freeze.

“The Alaska natives,” he said, “in giving up so much of their rights wish in return a fair share and involvement in that progress.

“But as you have already witnessed, even our governor is making such expressions. Progress, it seems, is good only so long as it does not hinder the already affluent and their intense financial drives, and as long as it does not upset those eco-

nomic basis’ which keep the affluent at their level in society.

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Thomas said that at the same time that the newcomers are raising the cost of living to unimaginable heights; that they were raping the land of the food, “and talking down their cigar at us telling us to learn to live as they.”

THE “NOW”

Jim Thomas changed the subject to the education of the native youth. He said that all through his high school and college days at Holland, Michigan, he sat through and listened to many a speech in which he was referred to as the “young man in transition.”

“I do not wish to stand here today and tell you that you are the youth in native transition,” Thomas said. “No, my friends, you are not the transitional among our native peoples, rather, you are the youth and aspirants

of a time I shall refer to as, “NOW.”

Jim Thomas told the students that they were developing their minds at a time when man reaches out and conquers the universe.

“I feel, and maybe justifiably so, that I and some generations before me, am truly the man in native transition. We fight and have fought for opportunities which reflect justice in its time structure.

“We have carried you and your generation to the crossroads of culture and time. I’d like to think that you are the people who will leave the desks of study and arrive at a point known as ‘now’ for you.”

Thomas told the students to forget they were from the minority and to set their sights on competition in which they become the winner; that before they can be tough in a rough world and emerge winners, they must be tough with themselves.

“It’s one of the hardest lessons of my life and I haven’t licked it yet—but remember I can say that—I’m only transitional,” said Thomas.

He told them to focus on a goal to become the best.

“Go beyond the doctor—ex-

amine the field of specialty; look beyond that initial degree and see your name as the first at the door of a large law firm; envision the presidency of colleges, universities and industry.”

Thomas concluded:

“See for yourself, that love and good humor and cohesion for our native peoples have developed in spite of, or because life has been a difficult struggle.

“I fight today for our entry as a ‘now’ people, because I want my children to pattern their lives after your success.”