

# 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-

nomie basis' which keep the affluent at their level in society."

"I sometimes wonder how much oil leased land 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 land which have become a mite illicitly theirs."

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-

## Claims Issue Meeting Cancelled

The issue of the Native Land Claims settlement that was to be the topic of tonight's meeting at the Duckering Building at the University of Alaska, has been cancelled.

It was scheduled for Room 203-204 at 7:00 p.m.

It has been postponed until the next semester at the University.

Representatives from Governor Keith H. Miller's office and the Alaska Federation of Natives were to be the key speakers.

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."

## Schooling Obstacles . . .

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were covered with Indian art work done by the students. The students were cordial and willing to talk about their center.

Some of the services available at the inter-cultural center are counselling, tutoring, special classes in English and math; during the summer a pre-college orientation program is offered to prospective freshmen students.

Many of the freshmen with whom we spoke felt that the orientation program was the biggest factor to their adjusting to college life.

Brigham Young University has developed a department on Indian education. BYU is operated by the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints and admitted to having a religious obligation to the Indian.

They recognize the unique cultural background of their Indian students and therefore have developed their own teaching methods and materials to meet this difference.

We visited a history class where the instructor had developed his own syllabus for the students to follow his lecture. According to the staff, the Indian students are being taught by their best instructors on campus. Their efforts are proving worthwhile, as BYU's Indian student dropout rate last year was 13 per cent compared to their overall dropout rate of 14 per cent.

The tour of the four universities and our contact with the students themselves was revealing. These observations helped our group to shape ideas for the program underway at the University of Alaska.

As Helen put it, "It made me realize what we have here in Alaska and how hard we have to work if we really want to succeed."

Sam felt that the visit to "Fort Lewis College and Brigham Young University shows that the problems of the native student can be solved."

The five in our group hope to use the ideas we learned on the trip to develop a similar program at the University of Alaska. We, together with Dorothy Napoleon, junior from Hooper Bay, comprise an advisory board to the University of Alaska program aimed toward the native student on campus.

Mr. Egan, who was former director of the Upward Bound Program at the University, acts as advisor to the board as well as being counsellor to students seeking counsel.

Since returning from our visit to the four universities, the six members of our advisory board have met and developed some recommendations to the University of Alaska's Academic Coun-

cil and have received overwhelming support.

Alaska is in the midst of a boom, and no one is more aware of its implications than young people. The opportunities are there for future young leaders and many are preparing for the responsibilities ahead through higher education.

Each year more and more Alaska native students are attending the University. Unfortunately, along with this increase the number of students who leave before graduation has increased as well.

The six on our board have experienced many of the problems faced by new students from the bush areas and, therefore, feel we can help them. We hope eventually to pool our ideas together into a proposal to implement tutoring, counseling, a study area with a typewriter perhaps, student visitation to the bush areas to tell villagers and prospective students the college story, and so forth.

Later it is hoped that classes especially geared to bi-lingual students can be implemented.

Special Orientation Services (as the program is called) was begun last year by a volunteer committee of interested University of Alaska faculty members including Mr. Egan.

These committee members wrote a preliminary outline of what to include in the program. In the meantime, Mr. Egan had opportunity to visit several universities in the Lower 48 to look over their programs adapted toward their Indian students.

His visit provided many of the ideas for a preliminary proposal. On September 1, 1969, SOS was able to open an office with a gift of \$10,000 from the Humble Oil Company.

Presently, Mr. Egan's office is located in a former apartment at Hess Hall. The walls need paint, the carpet is worn and the furniture is second-hand, but it is a place where students can feel free to come. There is a coffee-pot going all day, and always someone with whom to talk.

Some students find the lounge a convenient place to study; others come to tutor or be tutored.

Every day during the past weeks students have been coming in for tutoring services in mathematics, English, Spanish, Russian, psychology, sociology and anthropology.

Does this work? One freshman student claims that she wouldn't have made it through registration and the first weeks of school without the help of the services available through the center. SOS is determined that there will be many others.



INDIANS PROBE INDIAN EDUCATION—Native students from the University of Alaska recently toured four Lower 48 universities to look into the education of Indians under the direction

of Robert Egan, right. Helen Atkinson, left, was one of the students who went along. Center, is Audrey Ambrose.

—ROBERT KOWELUK Photograph

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