

Governor Sends Special Message to Natives

Settlement of the land claims of the Alaska Native people bestows the justice promised in the treaty of purchase, the statehood act, and the Constitution of the State of Alaska. It will open the door to full participation by all of us in the economic, political and social life of the state.

By enhancing the opportunity of the Native people for self-development, the ability of all the people of the state to move forward is enhanced.

No one can foresee with complete certainty what the impact of the settlement will be. Certainly, it should have and will have no effect in reducing the responsibility of the state to provide services on an equal basis to all its citizens. The settlement is in payment for just claims held by the Natives.

Not for transference of governmental obligations.

By working toward a common goal, we in Alaska have seen justice served and we are learning to live as one people in fulfillment of the ideals on which America was founded.

And through cooperation now among all Alaskans, our children and grandchildren can inherit the kind of state which we are all dedicated to building, a society of people who genuinely care about each other as brothers and sisters and cherished human beings.

A claims settlement will further provide resources for developing the most important one of all—our human resources. It will bring about human betterment which up to now, because of the state's meager financial resources, has been impossible to achieve.

Human betterment programs which complement each other, no matter what the source, can enable us to make strides never before dreamed of—in health care, in education, in housing . . . in the entire realm of human deprivation and suffering caused by poverty.

Through cooperation, we can achieve much.

For example. There is a need for cooperation which will insure that all lands available to the state for selection and which have been granted for ownership by Natives under the claims settlement are used, in a manner which will provide the maximum benefits in all respect to the people.

There are many areas of consideration ahead of us in which such cooperation is only logical.

An important consideration is resources conservation and development. Cooperation in this is vital if both the state and Natives are to realize maximum benefits from lands, petroleum reserves and other natural resources. Unilateral development programs by each, without regard for the other's goals, almost surely would work to the detriment of both.

A major fact which must be kept in mind is that benefits from the claims settlement, as historic and large as it is, will evolve much more slowly than some have anticipated.

The settlement provides no large lump-sum payment initially and the annual payments are relatively small when compared to needs in economic development in the vastness of rural Alaska.

When we stop to realize that Alaska's \$900 million in north slope oil bonus monies did not begin to magically solve all the state's human resource needs, we must realistically acknowledge that the annual claims settlement payments amounting to only a small fraction of that huge amount will take time to produce dramatic changes.

In addition, the 2 per cent overriding royalty on mineral production in Alaska which will contribute as estimated \$500 million to the settlement will derive mainly for several years to come from north slope production through the trans-Alaska pipeline. And, of course, construction is yet to begin on the pipeline.

There are these, and many other considerations ahead as the claims settlement is implemented.

The settlement holds unprecedented possibilities for dramatically improving life in our state, not only for Natives but for all Alaskans. And Alaskans, working together, can achieve that.

—WILLIAM A. EGAN
Governor of Alaska