

Editorial Comment—

Arctic Slope's "ASNA," The Vigorous Fighter

"... You are getting paid faster—perhaps one hundred years faster—because the Arctic Slope Native Association said—No—No—No!"

The above quotation is from the speech of the president of the Arctic Slope Native Association, Joseph Upicksoun, he gave during the Alaska Federation of Natives' conference in Anchorage recently.

The leaders of ASNA, right from the start, have been strong, vigorous spokesmen for their people on the Arctic Slope. Starting some seven years ago, the Hugh Nicholls, Sam Taalaks, Charlie Edwardsons and Joe Upicksouns have been vociferous in the fight for justice for their people. The main basis for their fight was land. They wanted enough of it for Alaska natives and perhaps a little more for the Arctic Slope because the hunting patterns of the slope people covered more distances than in some other areas. This, we think, is a reasonable demand.

It becomes even more reasonable with the following quote from the same speech of Joe Upicksoun:

"... There is still another injury you have hit us with, and that is the cost of living difference. Using Seattle as a base of 100, construction costs at Ketchikan are 125—at Anchorage around 160—at Bethel 245—and at Barrow—365!"

That is a staggering difference. Something should be done about it. We have, editorially, pointed this out in the past—that freight rates and other things be considered because if the Arctic Slope was given equal amounts as other areas, the drain on the capital would be much more than in other areas. This should surely be considered. Otherwise, Arctic Slope is going to be shortchanged.

The claims bill as it came out from the joint conference committee, and which was signed by President Nixon into law on December 18, 1971, has turned out to be rather unkind to the North Slope people. The pattern of the fight for the equitable settlement of the claims was many times spearheaded by ASNA. The meat of the sentiment for a certain stand was always there. In fact, other organizations that make up the AFN have learned some real basics from the arguments of ASNA leaders. Some presentations by the Slope leaders was not always to the liking of others, including ourselves, but the logic was always there.

We think that some corrective measures should be forthcoming in the way of amendments to the bill starting as early as January when Congress reconvenes. In order that a strong attempt can be made for amendments to the bill starting as early as January when Congress reconvenes.

In order that a strong attempt can be made for amendments, the organizations in the AFN should get behind ASNA if that organization wishes to push for amendments for the good of the Arctic Slope Eskimos. After all, those northernmost people have furnished some of the real aims of the equitable solution to the Alaska Native Land Claims.