

Editorial—

Unilateral Action?

State Attorney General Donald Burr appeared before the Alaska Federation of Native Associations conference last Friday and ran into a veritable buzz saw of pointed questions from the Native delegates and the associations' counsel.

Burr represented Governor Walter J. Hickel who was to have been present but who changed his mind at the last minute.

The questions from the floor seemed to have established a feeling that the State may be acting unilaterally in its planned suit against the Department of the Interior to force that department to say negatively or affirmatively on the question of land claims made by the Native people of Alaska within the last few years. "You are not working for us" or "You are against us" came up from the floor more than once as a result of the Attorney General's answers.

The session also brought up a feeling that the State might be working for a "yes" from the Interior Secretary Stewart Udall. If the Secretary's answer turned out to be affirmative, the State of Alaska, we presume, would then go forward to patent the lands, Native claims or no. Which means, the State would get title to the lands and follow along the direction, as Burr said, that on patented lands, "Aboriginal title has been put to rest."