

Gruening Lauds LBJ's Message

Following testimony by Senators Ernest Gruening (D—

Alaska), Robert Kennedy (D—N.Y.) and Fred Harris (D—Okla.) on the desperate need for improving the quality of life for American Indians and Alaska Natives, President Johnson urged Congress to appropriate one-half a billion dollars for programs targeted at the American Indian for fiscal 1969—about 10 percent more than fiscal 1968.

During his message to Congress, President Johnson also issued an Executive Order to establish a National Council on Indian Opportunity. He said, "our goal must be:

- A standard of living for Indians equal to that of the country as a whole.

- Freedom of Choice: An opportunity to remain in their homelands, if they choose, without surrendering their dignity; an opportunity to move to the towns and cities of America, if they choose,

(Continued on page 5)

Gruening Lauds . . .

(Continued from page 1)

equipped with the skills to live in equality and dignity.

—Full participation in the life of modern America, with a full share of economic opportunity and social justice."

The three senators and representatives from numerous Indian groups testified before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs Subcommittee on Indian Affairs on legislation designed to reexamine, and where necessary change, policies of Congress and Administrative procedures adversely affecting American aboriginal groups.

Commenting on President Johnson's message, Senator Gruening said:

"This is a splendid message. It is particularly applicable to Alaska where Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts

are approximately 1/6 of our population and have suffered great disadvantages which call for immediate and far-reaching remedies.

"We're engaged now in trying to correct by legislation one aspect of the problem, land claims by Alaska Natives. Hearings on the proposed legislation were recently held in Anchorage and final hearings will be conducted in Washington, D. D. to permit everyone who wishes to be heard to testify.

"I am pleased to see that President Johnson has taken special notice of this extremely important issue."

Senator Gruening continued, "It now remains the duty of respective committees of Congress to implement these recommendations and to try and secure action at the earliest possible time."