

INDEPENDENT POLITICAL PARTY SOUGHT BY GROUP

Eskimos Claim Huge North Slope Area

Favorable Reaction Received So Far On New Party Idea

The Arctic Slope Native Association, of Barrow, is pressing the idea of forming an independent Native political party.

The association has sent letters to native leaders in a number of areas throughout the state seeking their opinion as to the feasibility of starting such a party.

"So far we have heard from the Juneau area and from Barter Island," said Hugh Nichols, a member of the association's board of directors.

"Generally they were receptive to the idea but they had some comments and questions.

But Nichols said that reaction was sought from all parts of Alaska before any definite action was contemplated.

"It may be that after we have received comment and

discussed the proposal thoroughly, we may decide instead of forming a political party to establish a political action committee."

Nichols indicated that a political organization was needed to consolidate the Native vote, which he said was about 30 per cent of the total vote in the state.

In asking for support, the ASNA sent the following letter on January 11 to eleven Native leaders in Fairbanks, St. Lawrence Island, Tyonek,

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New Party Sought...

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Anchorage, Nome, Nunivak Island, Juneau, Kotzebue, St. Paul Island, and Bethel.

Barrow reports that several favorable replies, expressing interest have been received to date.

The Letter

"We are contacting you and other Native leaders to obtain your opinion on a matter of vital concern to all Alaska Natives. Recently we have formed a new association with headquarters in Barrow to be known as the North Slope Native Association (Editor's Note: This organization is now known as the Arctic Slope Native Association.) Whose primary objective is the pressing of the land claims of the Native people of this area.

"Secondly, we have in mind the strengthening of the Native vote in the political structure of the state. Our thoughts are this: We, as Native people, represent approximately 30 per cent of the total vote of this state.

"As long as we remain predominantly Democrats, we are the minority of one party and as such, do not carry much influence in deciding the platform of this party. Now, if we form an independent Native political party, we immediately are in a position where either the Democrats or Republicans must acknowledge our point of view and just demands in the fields of education, housing, job equality and training to obtain our vote.

"As an independent political party, they will be obliged

to seek our vote to attain any victory in the polls. It would not be necessary for us to place our own candidate on the ballot in all cases, except in predominantly Native areas and then only as state representatives and senators; but as independents, we could endorse those candidates of either party who will be most willing to work for us on our behalf, most particularly in the U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, and the Governorship.

"Also the 30 per cent independent vote would have a definite influence on any political platform decided upon by either of the two major parties.

"It is with the view of forming such an independent party that we are writing you, to obtain your views on the matter and to solicit your active participation and that of your people in such a move.

"By this process we will change our position from that of seeking support to one where our support is keenly sought after, thereby giving us the advantage of being able to effectively bargain for needed legislation affecting our people on the whole.

"An early reply to the above proposal, together with your views, is earnestly looked forward to."

At the initial meeting of the Arctic Slope Native Association in Barrow, 115 members were in attendance. A chapter has also been organized at Pt. Hope but as yet the membership list has not been compiled and sent to Barrow.

Membership is open to both women and men, and there is no age restriction. The only requirement is a member must be part-Native and understand the principles and purposes for which the association is working.