

RALPH PERDUE CROSSES PARTY LINE TO SUPPORT MIKE GRAVEL

Prominent Native GOP Actively Campaigns for Democratic Candidate

By HOWARD ROCK
Times Editor

In an unprecedented move by a prominent native politician, Ralph Perdue, an Athabascan Fairbanks jeweler and a well known Republican, has crossed party lines to give strong political support to Mike Gravel, a Democrat.

Stating that the voters in general, and particularly the native people, Perdue said that they should vote for the man and not necessarily for the person because of his party affiliation.

Mike Gravel, candidate for the U.S. Senate, is making a strong bid to defeat the incumbent, Sen. Ernest Gruening, for nomination in the August 27 primary election in Alaska.

"I'm actively campaigning for Mike because I believe he is the man who can get the job done in the field of quality education in locations the native people want," said Ralph Perdue today. "I believe that Mike is the

person who listens to people and do the job the way the people wanted it done."

"I also feel," he continued, "that by electing Mike, the Washington delegation offices would have better communications between the three offices, the senators' offices and his office. Communication is lacking now."

Perdue pointed out that in respect to jobs that are available in the Army Air Force installations and all federal agencies, he feels the native people need a senator who will convey the peoples' message.

"We need a senator who will put pressure on the Bureau of Indian Affairs to train people for jobs in these installations," said Perdue.

ALLEGATION

Ralph Perdue took note of the recent allegation made by former state representative Warren Taylor that Gravel had at one time referred to the Tyonek Indians as "just another

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bunch of savages."

"Allegation that Warren Taylor made against Mike Gravel was totally without basis," Perdue said. "I don't think that these are true, and the new generation of leaders and the native people who will go for this type of mudslinging and old-line politics—this will not sway the native people of Alaska today."

"If Mr. Taylor," he continued, "is so interested how the native people should vote, one question sticks in my mind. When a lawyer of his stature speaks out and tries to sway our votes, I wonder how many native people Mr. Taylor has defended in court out of the goodness of his heart."

SEN. GRUENING

At this point, Perdue switched the subject of the interview to Sen. Ernest Gruening.

"As far as Sen. Gruening is concerned, I am constantly reminded that he solved discrimination problems 30 years ago but he is overlooking discrimination that is being perpetuated by the BIA today," he said.

Perdue revealed that he had checked Sen. Gruening's attendance record in the Senate in Washington, D. C.

"It reveals to me that he has the lowest attendance record of any senator seeking election. We need someone in Washington who will treat the office as a full time job," Perdue stated.

Ralph Perdue said that he has been haunted by a disturbing statement that Sen. Gruening made at Fort Yukon on April of 1964 which he cannot forget.

Gruening had gone to that upper Yukon River village to conduct a hearing on the Rampart Dam area withdrawal. The senator had come in on a chartered plane.

At the end of the hearing, Fort Yukon city council members had asked Sen. Gruening to discuss the Yukon River bank erosion that had then threatened to carve out sections of the town during spring and summer high water periods.

Perdue said that the senator didn't care to discuss the subject and indicated that he would do nothing because the village

would be underwater in a few years anyway.

At that point, Perdue said, the senator walked out and flew away. Perdue pointed out that there was now no Rampart Dam and a dike has since been built without Sen. Gruening's help.

"As one of the native leaders of Alaska and member of the Alaska Federation of Natives, I cannot withhold myself any longer and go on in my own way making a living, and have our elected officials saying things of this nature about our people," stated Perdue.

"One of the reasons," he went on, "that I have taken this freedom to come out and support a Democrat, when I'm a well known Republican, I have been preaching to all members of the Tanana Chiefs Conference to vote for the man and not necessarily a party that the individuals belonged to."

"I believe that President Lyndon Johnson put it very bluntly in April of 1967 when he in his speech said that there was too much party loyalty and not enough loyalty for the people represented."

NOT BOLTING

"The fact that I'm backing Mike Gravel in this campaign doesn't mean that I'm bolting the Republican Party. I'm still a Republican and will remain a Republican."

"I sincerely urge all those people in the Interior, Arctic Slope, and all over Alaska in general who know me personally, or know about me, to vote for Mike Gravel."

Perdue pointed out that the August 27 primary election was very much like a general election because it is an open primary. That means the voters can vote for anyone they wished, either Democrats or Republicans.

"In this primary election, our people should know and realize that they can vote for either the Republican or Democratic ticket," Perdue said.

Perdue has long been prominent among the native leadership in Alaska. He is the vice president of the Tanana Chiefs. He has a successful jewelry business here in Fairbanks.