

McGovern Calls for Equitable Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Senator George McGovern (D-S.D.) last week told the Senate that the administration should submit a bill settling the Alaska Native land claims which fully recognizes their lawful rights.

McGovern stressed that "the settlement they request...can avoid for Alaska Natives the exploitation, the abuse, and the attempted cultural genocide of Indians which blots our national heritage."

"The legislation we enact to settle the land claims of 60,000 Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts of

Alaska can stand as a unique and classical example of enlightened government acting in good faith.

"Or it can simply continue a long and tragic record of actions to deprive the American Indian of his land and resources, and to further his desperate economic and cultural impoverishment," remarked McGovern.

"It is not a question of what Congress will give the Alaska Natives; it is one of determining how much of what is theirs they will be allowed to keep," he added.

McGovern noted that, while Natives make up 20 per cent

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Senator McGovern...

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of Alaska's population, they now request 16 per cent of Alaska territory even though they have "arguable claims" to 90 per cent of the state.

He stated that S. 835, which contains provisions sought by the AFN, is "eminently reasonable," while S. 35, the bill which passed the Senate last year, "is unsound for the Alaska Native people and for the Nation."

As a cash supplement to subsistence living, he added, S.35 would provide an initial and unlivable annual income of \$53.00 per capita.

McGovern indicated that the Administration's proposal submitted to the last Congress was "even worse" than S. 35. He called on Interior Secretary Morton to review the bill again.

Senator McGovern called on the Administration to either support S. 835 or to submit "a new administration proposal with similar context, incorporating the major elements of the Alaska Federation of Natives' position."

Support of the Native position, continued McGovern, "will afford a wise and courageous Native people a meaningful opportunity for self-determination and the base for a better life for themselves and their heirs.

"It can avoid for Alaskan Natives the exploitation, the abuse, and the attempted cultural genocide of Indians which blots our national heritage...

"The decision we make on this legislation will profoundly affect the lives of Alaska Natives for generations.

"But it will reflect on our national honor for centuries."

Senator McGovern is one of ten Senators who co-sponsored S. 835, and is one of fourteen who have pledged support for the AFN position.