

Writer's Rebuttal on Rothman Testimony

323 Farewell Avenue

Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

March 8, 1971

Dear Mr. Rock:

Last week you printed one of Stu Rothman's uninformed statements from the Pipeline Hearings. This was the one where he said that the Natives have no land rights because Russia sold Alaska to the United States. He suggested that the Natives look to Russia for payment of the land that was taken from them.

Mr. Rothman overlooks first that Russia never bought Alaska from the Natives and, therefore, did not sell the United States anything. If it is argued that Russia conquered Alaska and therefore owned it, then Russia only sold the few isolated outposts it held--such as Sitka and other small tracts of land.

The situation is similar to the following example: White man number 1 owns a piece of land. White man number 2 gives a Native a deed to white man number 1's land, and the Native pays number 2 for it. Then the Native tries to move onto white man number 1's land. Needless to say, white man number 1 does not lose his land. If the Native wants the land, he will still have to pay the real owner for it.

In other words, since the Russians did not own most of Alaska when the United States bought it, the United States does not yet own most of what it claims in Alaska. The United States must now buy Alaska from the Natives.

The land claims bills in Congress are an attempt to do that.

Sincerely,
David Wolf