

**"I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it." — Voltaire**

# Bill S.1830 Deemed Grossly Inadequate

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Mr. Howard Rock, Editor  
Tundra Times  
Fairbanks, Alaska

Dear Mr. Rock:

The U.S. Senate has passed a bill (S.1830) purporting to settle the historic claims of Alaska Natives. That bill is now before the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. The Senate bill is inadequate in many ways, but it seems to me totally unacceptable in its provision for title to only 10 million of the 60 million acres that the Natives use. That provision makes the whole settlement economically unsound, for the Alaska Native people and for the Nation. It will impoverish many Alaska Natives by substituting an unlivable annual cash income supplement (\$53 per person in the first year, rising to \$418 in 20 years) for their present right to make a subsistence living (and some cash income) by hunting, fishing, berrying, trapping on the lands that this bill strips from them. It does this without offering these Natives THE MEANS OF TRANSITION FROM A SUBSISTENCE STYLE OF LIFE TO A FULL CASH/JOB ECONOMY.

Yet the policy guiding the proposed legislation is to require this transition by the very terms of the settlement: the Senate report on the bill notes that "the historic way of life" of the Natives should not be "perpetuated by Congressional action, because 'civilization' has and must come to the Native people. Certainly the processes of change from the historic ways of life cannot be held off, but just as certainly the settlement should provide for a dignified, humane, and economically sound transition.

The proposed settlement attempts to cushion the transition by two major provisions: First, it gives the individual Alaska Native in the initial year about \$201 worth of social services, DE-

## Claims Compromise

There is a great surge of activity on the native land claims this week in Washington, D.C. The activity is centered around the House Indian Affairs Subcommittee and the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. Steering Committee of the Alaska Federation of Natives is also present in Washington to try to bear its influence in the formulation of a justifiable land claims bill in the U.S. House of Representatives.

There is a great concentration of powerful forces at work and from this vantage point, there seems to be diverse opinions in several quarters. This is a disturbing situation indeed but we keep hoping that although it is serious, there can be a meeting of the minds for the greatest good—a meeting of the minds for greatest justice possible for the Native people of Alaska.

Assimilationist viewpoints and paternalistic ones seem to be among the trouble spots. These are viewed by our native leaders as probable sources of oppression in the lives of the native people in the future if they are contained in the House claims bill. They can be a drag along the line of progressive effort.

And then there is the land area, a mere 10 million acres out of the 375 million Alaska land area for 20 per cent native population segment of the state—a provision made by the U.S. Senate in its version of the claims bill. That bill is coming to be known as the assimilationist bill probably viewed as payment for getting the native people into the mainstream of Western culture. Giving up native culture is too big of a price to pay even for 10 million acres and \$1 billion.

We are of the opinion, in fact we know, that the native people would rather have 40 million acres and less money. We might even say that they might not be averse to giving up the 2 per cent overriding royalty proposal in exchange for more land area. Land is precious. Land is revered by Alaska's native people. They would like a good share of what they always had. Giving up too much of it would be a tragedy.

## Tundra Times



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CREASING to \$27 worth of services in the 20th year.

Second, it provides these Natives with title to a mere fraction of the land they are now using to get food, clothing, and shelter from. Of the 60 million acres now in use by the Natives, the act allows clear title to only 10 million. Yet, as the Senate report rightly states, "Without title to the lands they use and occupy, Alaska Natives are defenseless against commercial development which changes the character of and sometimes depletes subsistence resources..."

Let us take a close look at the current situation: Typically, villages with populations of around 200 Natives (the most usual village size) regularly use an area with a radius of 40-50 miles for hunting, fishing, and so forth. So the Federal Field Committee reports in ALASKA NATIVES AND THE LAND (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968). Thus, for their livelihood they rely directly on an area of 5000-7500 square miles. This area is scoured intensively, because the wildlife resources, like moose, caribou, and salmon must often be harvested to their fullest extent simply to meet subsistence requirements. Among the reasons why such large areas are necessary are the limited yield of lands in that part of the world, the migratory habits of the wildlife, and the fact that different forms of essential wildlife often are not to be found on the same kind of land.

Under the Senate bill, instead of a minimum 5000 square miles they have been using, villages like these would each have title to only 36 square miles at one location—together with scattered 5-acre campsites. (Even that title might become worthless as changes in environment from competing uses—commercial and sport; fishing, hydroelectric plants, pulp industry, etc.—in surrounding areas threaten the wildlife and its migratory patterns.) There is simply no source of livelihood for such villages that would replace the subsistence and cash income from the use of their wide ranges.

The Federal Field Committee states that the annual cash value of the subsistence activities of a family of five village Natives lies between \$1,000 and \$3,000. The proposed settlement would provide that family with about \$265 cash per year for five years, with increasing amounts later that would not rise to \$1,000 per year before 1982, or \$3,000 before 1986. Clearly, that is no substitute for the land rights lost to these families—who comprise about 30,000 of the 53,000 total Native population (1967 figures). The cash settlement is meaningful only to those who already live in towns and have little or no subsistence activities.

Because proposed benefits are distributed equally without regard to dependence upon the land, some 20,000 villagers who are most dependent on the land will lose heavily in the first 10-15 years of the settlement. Of these, some 7,000 who live in Native villages in the Interior will never recoup their losses (even in dollar mathematics) over the whole time period of the settlement; they will simply suffer confiscation.

In short, the incomes of the village Natives (which are, after all, already at poverty levels) will be severely reduced to an intolerable point and, under the additional pressure of population increase, many Natives will be forced to migrate to the non-native urban centers. There, without skills and education, facing outright discrimination, they will join the present 11,500 urban Natives, most of whom are poor themselves. Such a migration can only have the effects upon the migrants and upon the cities to which they flee. The transition required in this legislation is in effect a transition to greater poverty and to greater urban problems.

The economic fallacy of the settlement clearly lies in the swift deprivation of the traditional livelihood lands. A settlement that will not end up making the Natives welfare wards (of the Federal government) or of the State of Alaska must provide them title to a sufficient number of acres so that each Native can continue to feed, clothe, and shelter himself.

The title to the land must be definite, since the privilege of hunting on someone else's land cannot be guaranteed, even though the settlement seems to assume that somehow the Natives will indefinitely be allowed to use other people's land. Moreover, the acreage and rights must suffice to offer a change for an improvement in the currently low standard of living—through proposed economic development activities—especially in view of projected population increases.

Since any native economic development program will be a long-term proposition, there must be enough land to offer subsistence in the meantime. Job and income opportunities will not increase fast enough to nullify the need for subsistence lands for a generation in many areas of Alaska. In addition, to the extent that the growth of Alaska will not be in Native hands, they will not be able to insist upon access to the jobs that such growth will create. (The experience of blacks in the economic growth throughout U.S. metropolitan areas, including the inner cities, provides ample evidence for this, as does the recent experience of urban Alaska Natives themselves.)

What actually should be the number of acres that will support the livelihood of the native population while offering the opportunity for development from the subsistence culture? A computation of sheer economic grounds is complex and must vary not merely with population counts but also ecology and present and future land use.

Given the present unchallenged figure of a minimum of 60 million acres now in use by the Natives, the 10 million acre settlement is obviously inadequate. The recommendation of the Alaska Federation of Natives of 40 million acres would appear to be reasonable as a figure that permits an orderly transition in a growing Alaska in which the economic rights of the Natives will be protected.

Perhaps I should state that I am an outsider to Alaska, having never even visited the State. But as a social scientist who has been concerned with problems of economic development of the poorer groups in an affluent nation, I believe there are certain basic features of the Native claims situation that are evident to anyone who cares to review the situation. The most evident is the Native need for secure title to enough land. Ten million acres is not enough, forty million could be.

Yours sincerely,  
Stewart E. Perry  
Director

## Funding Indian Business

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Louis R. Bruce said this week that creation of Indian-owned small business enterprises on and near reservation communities will receive "significant encouragement" as the result of a newly created Indian Development Fund.

The Fund will provide financial grants for Indian small businesses.

Bruce said further: "I am sure that many Indian businessmen and women, and many who wish to start businesses of their own, will find this new source of aid an important part of their bootstrap efforts."

"It will also provide indirect help to Indian communities that presently are suffering from lack of sufficient business enterprises to generate a good economic base."

The Indian Development Fund is administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and is operating under a \$3.4 million appropriation for fiscal year 1971.

It is designed to provide "seed money" grants to Indian tribal members in need of a financial boost to open or expand business enterprises serving their local areas.

The grants will provide cash equity for Indians having less than sufficient equity to qualify them for small business loans from either public or private sources.

They may also be used to supplement business grants-in-aid from government agencies or foundations, and to supplement business loans to arrive at 100 per cent financing for the business venture.

Most Indians have found it difficult to take advantage of even the 90 per cent loan guarantee for Indian loans.

The Indian Development Fund grant may now be used to make up the difference for this and similar types of financing.

The Fund will be used only when all other customary sources of adequate funding are unavailable to the Indian or Indian group seeking financing, according to Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Orme Lewis, Jr., who helped engineer the plan.

Basic criteria for grants under the Indian Development Fund are these:

1. Ownership or proposed ownership exclusively by an Indian individual or group of Indians;
2. Location on or near a reservation or Alaskan Native village;
3. Profit-making or self-sustaining enterprise, or having the potential of being profit-making of self-sustaining within the total cost of expanding or establishing.

The bulk of the current appropriation for the Fund has been allocated on a reservation basis, with each allocation determined by such factors as economic development needs, existing local financing capacity, population, and success potential for various forms of development.

