

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

Tundra Times



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Editorial—

Well Done, Begich...

The effectiveness of Senator Stevens and Senator Gravel during the Alaska Native land claims fight is, at least, a highly controversial subject. There is much more agreement on the job done by Alaska Congressman Nick Begich on the House side.

When Begich arrived in Washington as a freshman congressman last year, the outlook for a fair and equitable land claims settlement was indeed bleak. Chairman Aspinall had proposed a bill which would provide less than 100,000 acres to Natives. The ranking Republican on the House Interior Committee, Rep. John Saylor of Pennsylvania, had angrily told lame duck Congressman Howard Pollock that Alaska would never receive a claims settlement out of that committee. The Alaska Senate delegation has predicted that the situation on the house side would prohibit favorable claims action.

Begich decided his first priority would be to work toward a settlement of the claims. He won friends easily among the House leadership, and was able to receive three committee assignments. The most important of these was his seat on the Interior committee, within that committee, he received an assignment to the Indian Affairs Subcommittee.

The freshman congressman was careful to attend every committee meeting, and over 98 per cent of the House roll calls. He hoped that, in working with colleagues from throughout the rest of the United States, they would be willing to give their attention to the settlement of the Alaska Native claims.

Averaging a seventeen-hour day, Begich was also careful to pay his respects to his colleagues. He called them before each committee meeting to ensure a quorum. He expressed his personal gratitude to them when they showed interest in the claims.

He won the respect of his colleagues. They began to share his belief that a fair and equitable settlement of the land claims was needed, and needed this year.

During an AFN meeting in Washington in mid-March, Begich told the group, "Timing is important. Don't pass judgement until you can judge properly. Give me a chance."

Begich masterfully executed his timing. The bill moved through the Indian Affairs Subcommittee, through the full House Interior committee, through the Rules Committee, and through the U.S. House of Representatives.

The House bill is less than what the AFN is asking. The split Native selection (18 million first for villages, 22 million after the state completes its selections) is undesirable. We hope that this can be corrected in the conference committee. But 40 million acres is a hell of an improvement over 80,000 acres—and this is a tremendous credit to Begich's efforts.

One veteran lobbyist was heard to comment, "It is the best individual achievement I have ever heard of a freshman congressman." We agree.

His persistence, and the atmosphere of honesty in which he worked, won the support of Chairman Aspinall and the House leadership—a well deserved support.

Well done, Congressman Begich.

Washington Commentary—

September's Swing To Sovereignty

BY RICHARD LA COURSE
American Indian Press Association

"We will look at the whole bureaucracy with regard to the handling of Indian affairs and shake it up, and shake it up very good. Frankly, when you look at how we have handled the Indian problem over the history of this country, it is a disgrace. And much is due to the fact that the bureaucracy feeds on itself, defends itself, and fights for the status quo and does very little, in my opinion, for progress in the field."

RICHARD M. NIXON (September 25, 1971)

WASHINGTON, D.C.—(AIPA)—The overture of the Indian sovereignty revolution is suddenly and unexpectedly complete after a series of unprecedented September events.

Tenuous and fragile as that revolution for self-rule remains, its impact on policy-makers in the nation's capitol was stunning. For in the first time in this century the nation's scattered Indian peoples rallied over common causes in a rare political alliance and set the White House itself on a different course.

The most visible effects of that alliance are a new Indian Water Rights Office to be established in Washington, D.C. a national advisory board of reservation and urban peoples to counsel the Indian Bureau and Interior Secretary on Indian policies and programs, and a pledge by Interior to the National Congress of American Indians and the National Tribal Chairmen's Association that they will review the BIA budget for next year before its approval by Interior Secretary Rogers C.B. Morton.

The invisible effects are the subtle shifts in personal relationships of those in authority in Indian affairs here, while personnel reassignments remain in the offing.

In the brief period of a single month's time, both urban and reservation Indians appeared to coincide in common causes of concern, appealing both to the nation and its architects of Indian policy in an unparalleled series of developments. September's developments were these:

—The NCAI initiated a policy assault on the White House in the first week of September, charging the administration with a breach of promise in six major areas of national Indian concern, and stating that until the President reasserted his announced policies both in terms of programs and personnel, the faith of American Indians was "shaken."

—The new association of elected tribal leaders (NTCA) gathering in the Navajo bailiwick of Window Rock, Arizona, on September 10, heard Navajo Chairman Peter MacDonald lacerate "old-line appointments" within Interior and the Bureau. MacDonald also assaulted some recent appointees by name within those agencies who appeared to him to be stalling—and in some cases reversing—announced policies concerning Indian sovereignty.

MacDonald, an articulate Southwest leader whose political star is rising rapidly across the country, further proposed an Indian "truth network" nationwide to accost federal officials around the country in their public appearances with the "alternate truth" of Indian realities.

MacDonald proposed independence of the Indian Bureau from Interior, under "receivership" status in the Executive Office of the President as long as Indian existence and Indian rights were imperilled by conflicts of interest within the Interior Department. MacDonald stung Morton appointees by labelling them a "Super BIA" at odds both with the nation's Indians and Commissioner Bruce's innovative new Indian team, and demanded dismissal of the Super BIA as a cardinal feature of the administration's sincerity on its announced Indian policies.

—Militant actions in the lobby of the Bureau on the morning of September 22—a symbolic citizen's arrest of Deputy Commissioner John O. Crow for a series of alleged offenses—thrust the administration into a flurry of bad press and a paroxysm of self-doubt.

Police violence witnessed by the press (at first barred from the building) and the insistence by Bruce that charges against the 26 arrested Indian persons be dropped and Interior assist in their early release extended White House worry into late-night sessions with Interior. Traditionally conservative tribal chairmen then in the city endorsed the militant action by the American Indian movement and the National Indian Youth Council, and declared an unprecedented unity of purpose with the activist Indian young.

—The capstone to the edifice of policy reevaluation was a White House request for position papers and program particulars concerning specific areas of Indian protest. Those areas were defense of Indian water rights, personnel matters relating to the hiring and promotion of Indians within top positions in the Bureau, the letting of contracts concerning Indian operation of social institutions such as schools and projects, and the construction of roads linking the political, social, educational, health and economic centers of reservations.

In a special Interior press conference Oct. 4, Morton

(Continued on page 7)

WRITE ON!

Fish Came from Cold Arctic Waters

KOTZEBUE SOUND AREA FISHERY COOPERATIVE, INC. P.O. Box 266 Kotzebue, Alaska 99752

October 5, 1971

Dear Howard:

The Kotzebue Sound Area Fishery Cooperative sends you from the cold arctic waters of the Kotzebue Sound, a sample of the 'resident' Arctic Char & Shee Fish for the Tundra Times Banquet.

On behalf of the membership of the Kotzebue Co-op, I send our sincere wish for you and the Tundra Times continued success, for all our benefit.

The Arctic Char & Shee fish is a small token of appreciation for the invaluable human resource TUNDRA TIMES provides.

May our knowledge be your success. I remain.

Sincerely,
Wilfred Lane
Manager

David Unhappy With Postmaster

Kwigillingok Alaska
September 15, 1971

Dear Mr. Rock:

I have for sometime wondering and thinking who I should write. And tell you and the readers if they do have the same problem we have here.

I know that the Government have given each village a post office to serve them and I know that our post office is to be open 6 hrs. a day on week days; the reason I know is because some one working in post office in Anchorage wrote to me and told me that our post office is to be open 6 hrs. a day on week days. But here at Kwigillingok we don't go to post office any time during weekdays except on mail days (Mondays and Thursdays).

So that is our problem here at Kwigillingok. And our postmaster is paid. I'm sure from post office department I suppose for working days when he is doing work for himself.

If post office department can pay a man working for himself, we the people of Kwigillingok should be paid like our postmaster. Because we go to post office like our post master which is mail days (Mondays and Thursdays).

The reason I'm writing to you is hoping that you print this in TUNDRA TIMES, so it can be read by the people who have same problem. I would feel better if they write to me and tell me so that we the people of Kwigillingok are not the only ones that watch for post master to go to post office.

The reason I'm writing this letter to TUNDRA TIMES is hoping that there is someone that can help us having better post master that can be paid 6 hrs. a day on week days.

And our village council wouldn't do nothing about this since they are related to each other except for the treasurer.

This is about all I have to say for now and will be hoping that there is a way for us to be served by our post master.

Sincerely yours,
David O. David