

Former secretary works for claims

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notice that "if there was anything I can do by signing a piece of paper, to protect Indian land rights or water rights or anything else, bring it in."

"And that was the way the stage was set for the initial freeze," he said.

The freeze, of course, was the land freeze...on a large chunk of federal lands in Alaska, until such time as the issue of aboriginal claims was settled.

It happened in 1966 and it set off a chain of events which resulted in the settlement.

Udall remembered much of the detail, particularly that he did not talk to the members of the Alaska congressional delegation about the land freeze order before it was signed. "I think all of them thought I was crazy," he said.

A number of Alaska businessmen were also angered. "My

name was mud and I was being plastered with more mud every day. There was nothing anybody could find to say favorable to what I had done, except for the Native leaders, who were quietly learning how to speak up and how to handle the politics of it," he said.

The common argument of those opposed to the settlement at the time was "why did the Alaska Natives need land?" he

said. "Why did they have to have title to it?"

"They didn't understand the importance of the land to Native people; that completely escaped them," he said.

In fact, when Richard Nixon became president and appointed Alaska Gov. Walter J. Hickel Interior Secretary, one of the first things Hickel said was that the land freeze instituted by one Interior Secretary could be undone by another.

"There was a series of breaks and one of the breaks was that Wally Hickel held a press conference in Seattle, on his way home from Washington," Udall

The AFN audience began laughing in recollection.

"He was, as you are when you've just been appointed to a President's cabinet, cocky. I was the same way. He made the statement that what one secretary could do, another one could undo...and he was right. Fortunately, he said it, because that became the focus of whether he should be confirmed or not."

After that, the pipeline issue began heating up and the Nixon White House was getting pressure from all sides, for a variety of reasons, to get the Native claims settled.

"Nixon was an adroit politician. He saw that, if there was some way out of this, that would please his friends in the oil industry and would please Alaska and would please the Natives, let's get it solved and it would be a big plus," Udall said. So Nixon signed the claims legislation that came through Congress and the AFN, then in convention in Anchorage, was told via telephone.

Udall said that at this point he was most concerned about the future; about what would happen over the next few decades.

He warned that there really is an energy crisis, in his view, and at the rate oil is being consumed in the United States, the country was going to run out.

"There are a lot of people down in Washington who say 'let's ransack Alaska, let's find it (the oil) and bring it out now.' I don't think that's in the interest of Alaska or the country as a whole."

"Whatever oil resources you have will come out, but why the rush," Udall said.

"Let's stretch it out, let's conserve it, let's make it last."

The former Interior Secretary said oil and other resources must be developed with an eye to conservation and that, in this vein, what's good for the country would also be good for the region (of Alaska).

Tundra Times Interview

Editor's Note: Last week, we interviewed Congressional candidate Democrat Eben Hopson. This week, as AFN convention delegates made plans to return home, we had a chance to talk with incumbent Republican Congressman Don Young.

TT: One of the most important issues at the AFN Convention was the slow pace of Native land conveyances because of court cases involving easements across Native-selected lands. Do you foresee Congress becoming involved in this issue?

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TT: One of the most important issues at the AFN Convention was the slow pace of Native land conveyances because of court cases involving easements across Native-selected lands. Do you foresee Congress becoming involved in this issue?

Young: Well, I don't think Congress through legislative process will ever become involved in speeding up the conveyance of lands, in fact, it probably would be dangerous. There is a real feeling in Congress today that maybe there was too much land disbursed as there was during the act itself, and there's also a feeling that with all the monies that this state is generating from the oil that there might be some possibility that they're not too excited about 104 million acres for the state. This is something we must be very aware of, and I think the best way that they can expedite the process is to do what we have been doing; we've got the Arctic Slope land transferred and we try to work out some means by which the Interior Department will be again more receptive to the transfer of lands through pressure from Congress, from committee work, through oversight. As far as legislation, I think we'd just be opening the door; every time I bring a bill on the floor to be amended, I actually get very nervous because there's a great deal of concern about, you know, maybe they did the wrong thing.

TT: Should, and will, the issue of Native subsistence rights be an integral part of the Alaska public lands legislation Congress must hammer out by 1978?

Young: I am a defender of subsistence use. And that has to be clarified, what is subsistence and what is not subsistence too. There is a real feeling in Congress though, that subsistence should be totally vacated, totally annihilated now because of the claims act and the loss of aboriginal rights—subsistence is based on aboriginal rights—and in the act it specifically says that aboriginal rights are terminated.

So we must recognize that just because we pass a law doesn't take away the need for those types of foods. We have to recognize though that subsistence itself must be subsistence, not for any other motive.

TT: Would you say it was the intent of Congress to terminate subsistence rights under the land claims act?

Young: It wasn't at that time, but through the language, that did happen, and now there's more effort to see that it's terminated.

TT: Is there anything that can be done at a national level about the unemployment that seems to be rising in the state again?

Young: There's plenty we can do if we get off our duff and allow ourselves to develop the state the way it should be developed. You can't live off welfare and you can't live off of non-production. You have tremendous potential up here, you have timber, you have fish, you have minerals, you have tourism, you have the whole program and this has been my big pitch all along: the oil is just a fleeting thing, and if we don't invest it properly and study economic growth, we will have unemployment.

TT: How would you assess the Alaska gas line situation? Should El Paso, should the Alaskan people, be as confident as they are that there is going to be a trans-Alaskan gas line?

Young: As far as Arctic Gas' position in Washington, everybody says they're winning. It's like the presidential race, I don't know who's winning, nobody else does either. It will be decided by the Congress and I think when they see the advantages of our all-Alaskan, all-American line, they will start changing their minds.

TT: Are you satisfied with the situation in Alaska with regard to the federal offshore oil leasing program?

Young: I'm satisfied we've made progress. I've got files of correspondence from the Interior Department. Nobody's ever given me credit for it, but the decline in size of those sales are mainly through my effort. We of course developed the revenue-sharing program under the Coastal Zone Management Act.

TT: Will Congress provide adequate back-up to the 200-mile fishing zone by appropriating enough funds to enforce it?

Young: I have no problem with that. We already have \$87 million additional above and beyond the supplemental for the Coast Guard this year, and we'll get more.

TT: Comments have begun to circulate that the Upper Susitna River hydroelectric projects are going to be too expensive for the amount of electricity they produce. What is your reaction to that?

Young: We have got to start producing energy from hydro-power in the State of Alaska, and there are other alternate sources. But we're running out of oil, people, I've been saying that, we can't depend on oil. This nation's economy is based on a surplus of energy. If you don't have energy, you don't have jobs, you don't have production.

TT: In the last congressional campaign, two years ago, the ability of a candidate to represent all Alaskans became an important issue. Do you feel it is an issue in this campaign?

Young: You know, I don't know, they made a big ado about that slogan. I've had that ever since I started, it's been on my stationary before the last election and I believe very strongly the fact that I represent all Alaskans—my background, I'm not a city boy, yet I've had an education, I can handle myself in the city as well as I can on the trapline. I've done a little bit of everything and I think I understand the people as a whole better than anybody else and I make a job of representing all of Alaska. I've passed major legislation concerning the state, not little legislation, but I've passed a lot of little legislation, right from the oil line on down. I've actually handled over 7,000 pieces of mail in the last two years, I've solved many peices of private problems without legislation, just cutting through the bureaucratic red tape, and those are the things I enjoy, so I think I do represent all of Alaska.

TT: What advantage do you have as an incumbent legislator in Congress in terms of solving Alaska's problems?

Young: The advantage lies 100% with the person with experience, who has been in and knows the ropes and understands the workings of the operation as far as who pushes what button, and I've got that ability. I work closely with the minority and the majority leadership.

TT: You have stated you would prefer to live in Alaska rather than Washington, D. C., will you be running for governor in 1978?

Young: No, you won't see me on the ballot for governor. I have a philosophy that I have always said—I don't run against incumbent party members.

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