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Almost a year has elapsed since I last visited Alaska and met with many of you. It has been an eventful one during which you have made some notable progress.

While I welcome the opportunity to be with you, I regret that there must be a vacant chair at the head table because of the passing of Dr. Henry S. Forbes.

We share warm memories of Dr. Forbes and deep appreciation for a man who accomplished more in his avocation than many people accomplish in their chosen professions. Moreover, Dr. Forbes continued to pursue his work with remarkable vigor at a stage in life when men are usually content to reminisce about the past. We owe him a great debt and it is fitting that you have chosen to honor his memory on this occasion.

Since the Tundra Times was so dear to the heart of Dr. Forbes, it is altogether appropriate for me to take a few minutes at the outset to reflect on the paper's accomplishments in its brief six year life span.

During the recent Congressional Hearings on the proposed Native Claims legislation, your leaders received many plaudits for their excellent performance. I wonder, however, whether that leadership would have been so effective without the job the Tundra Times did in communicating the issues to the Native people.

It was instrumental in creating a recognition of the need for leadership, of the need for organization and, yes, even saw fit to take the leaders to task when it felt they were not effectively discharging their responsibilities to the people.

Sometimes we tend to think of the Times' role only as a channel of communication among the Native people, but it has also served as the vehicle for communicating the needs and aspirations of the Natives to the people "Outside," including those of us in Washington who are charged with the responsibility for doing something about them.

In its short life span the paper has effectively championed causes in which the Native people have a vital interest. Setting aside for a moment the land claims issue, which I will discuss later, I would like to cite a few of these.

Were it not for the Tundra Times' role in relentlessly calling attention to the serious deprivation of the basic rights of the long-neglected Pribilof Islanders, these Natives would not have had the opportunity to assume an expanding role in business or government.

The Times also alerted the conscience of the Nation to the potential con- sequences of reckless experimentation by stressing the dangers of atomic fallout and the plight of the Native people involved.

Despite the deplorable conditions of Native housing to which the Times repeatedly called our attention, the benefits of the Indian housing program could not be realized by the Alaskan Native. However, finally the persistent efforts of Senator Bartlett led to the passage of a $10 million Alaska housing

program for which a million dollars to construct 200 houses will be available this year. In addition, the combined efforts of several agencies led by the Economic Development Administration and the Department of Housing and Urban Development will lead to the construction of over 200 new homes in the Bethel area within the next two years.

The Times, with a forceful assist from the Federal Field Committee, has focused the Nation's attention on the problem of native unemployment, At long last we in the Federal Government, the largest employer in the State, have stopped giving lip service to the problem and are finally mounting a concerted effort to do something about it.

Under the leadership of the Committee on Alaska Native Federal Hire, which consists of representatives of all of the agencies with sizable employment in Alaska, each agency has agreed to provide Natives with training specifically tailored to jobs available locally. The Indian Bureau will help the other agencies in screening and selecting the trainees, arranging for housing and providing for the subsistence necessary during the transition period.

At the outset we hope to fill at least 200 job opportunities this year. Our goal is to create employment for 1,600 Natives so that they fill at least ten percent of the Federal jobs in Alaska, aside from BIA and Indian Health which already far exceed that percentage. These will not be low-level, menial jobs, they will involve skills such as electronic technician, plumber, carpenter, and equipment operator, The Bureau of Indian Affairs has a key role to play in this operation and we intend to support it to the fullest extent in terms of funds and manpower.

While I am on the subject of jobs, I would be remiss if I did not mention the splendid performance of the Native fire-fighting crews for the Bureau of Land Management during the recent disastrous fire season in Alaska. I understand that over a million dollars was paid to nearly 2,000 Natives for their work.

Another area where I feel we are making significant progress is education, Since 1962 the State and the Bureau of Indian Affairs have been working together in developing a joint plan for providing adequate educational opportunities for the Native people of rural Alaska.

A key phase of the plan has been the cooperative establishment of regional, boarding high schools where the State constructs the school and BIA builds the dormitory and provides the State with funds to operate it, the first such facility, the William E. Beltz School at Nome, is now in its third year. A similar arrangement is being developed at Kodiak where the dormitory will be completed in time for the opening of the next school year. The Bureau expects to obtain funds shortly for the construction of a dormitory at Bethel in conjunction with the expansion of the State high school. In the near future, we plan to establish additional arrangements of this sort, some of them in larger centers of population.

Our capacity to move ahead more rapidly on this front was enhanced appreciably by the decision not to rebuild Mt. Edgecumbe.

It is always difficult to admit a mistake. But, after intensive review of the Mt. Edgecumbe proposal, we concluded that it just did not make sense to put close to $20 million into the construction and rehabilitation of a school for 1,000 students at that location, when only 20 percent of the anticipated enrollment would be from Southeast. We plan instead to expedite the construction of facilities closer to the pupils' homes.

In addition, the BIA has been transferring t1ie ownership and operation of its schools to the State. Since

1951, 40 schools have been transferred to State jurisdiction, and the transfer is now occurring at an accelerated pace. The BIA in the past has not always been as careful as it might have been in securing the consent of Native communities before transferring its responsibilities. Today, no school is transferred without the active participation of the local community in the planning process.

In the same vein, the Bureau has during the past two years worked with the village communities in establishing advisory school boards. Now every community with a Bureau school has elected officials serving as school board members. At an early date I expect to see these boards actually making basic decisions in connection with the schools' operations, instead of playing just an advisory role.

While the struggle to provide adequate educational facilities within the State of Alaska is going forward, we cannot foreclose the opportunity for a high school education from today's youth. Consequently, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has found space for 1,000 students from Alaska at high schools in Oregon and Oklahoma. No one believes that this is a satisfactory solution to the problem. No one likes to see young people separated from their homes and communities by long distances over extended periods of time. But it is greatly to the credit of thousands of Alaska youth and their parents that they have been willing to accept the separation rather than miss out on high school education altogether.

I would like to digress for a moment on the role of the Bureau. I have had my share of frustrations with the Indian Bureau for nearly eight years. It has not always been as vigorous as we might have liked, but nonetheless, I bristle when I see sweeping charges that the Bureau is primarily interested in perpetuating its hold on the Indian people.

Last year we spent considerable time and effort developing legislation that would permit us to turn over to Indian tribes the authority to manage their own lands. Much to my surprise and chagrin this move met with widespread opposition among Indian leaders, who would rather have the Bureau to "lean on," frequently in both senses of the term. Fortunately, most of your leaders in Alaska are willing to accept the responsibility of managing your own affairs. As you are growing to assume that role, I ask you to avoid the easy course of blaming BIA for all of the failures along the road. When you believe that the Bureau should be taken to task, do so, but try to be both specific and constructive with your criticism.

Last November when we met, the Native land claims issue seemed to be in the doldrums. Today it is, in my opinion, on the verge of resolution. This is due in large part to the fact that the Native leadership, the Congressional delegation and the State have all been pulling in the same direction.

I hope you are not disheartened by the failure to get a bill enacted this year. Issues of this magnitude are just too formidable to speed through the legislative process. Two decades were required to obtain passage of the Central Arizona Project. Those years were devoted to much hard work on the part of the proponents and the Congress. However, hard work alone did not put that project over the top. Unless the advocates had been willing to compromise by giving up features which, although desirable, were not essential, we would not have legislation today.

If you are to be successful in this struggle your leaders will undoubtedly be called upon to exercise their judgment on short notice without time for consultation at the village level. Bear in mind that they are leaders, not messengers. You chose them because you felt that they possessed the qualifications and good judgment to represent you. They may not be able to obtain everything that you and they would like. It is far easier to be doctrinaire and intransigent, than it is to make the hard decisions that will bring results.

At the time when we submitted our first Departmental proposal I was proud to be the first Secretary of the Interior to tackle this longstanding problem. In retrospect I see that our proposed solution left much to be desired. However, I need make no apologies for the principles for a just settlement that were laid down by President Johnson. Under any equitable settlement, the Natives should receive:

(1) title to the lands you occupy and need to sustain your villages;

(2) rights to use additional lands and water to maintain your traditional way of life if you so choose; and

(3) compensation commensurate with the value of lands taken from you.

I believe that it is incumbent upon the Native leaders to make a convincing case for translating these principles into concrete terms. Their presentation to the Congress last July contributed appreciably toward that end.

I hope that the time for results will be at hand in the next session of the Congress. But, while there has been widespread agreement on the principles for a just solution, and the Administration and the Native leadership are much closer to agreement than we were a year ago, the basic issues of how much land and how much money are far from being resolved.

As one who will no longer be involved in the struggle, I shall take the liberty of offering you my counsel. In short, it is for you to try to put yourselves in the shoes of the parties with whom you are dealing -- to appreciate their points of view and the constraints under which they are operating.

I have yet to speak to a member of Congress, or a representative of the Executive Branch, who does not believe that you have a worthy cause and that settlement is long overdue. Yet, they view the subject from a very different perspective.

Many of the Congressional leaders who will have to approve, and perhaps even formulate, a settlement played key roles in shaping Alaska Statehood legislation. They believe, correctly in my opinion, that the Congress discharged its responsibilities to the 49th State in a most generous fashion, more generously than it had treated their States.

Many of these Congressmen were instrumental in establishing the Indian Claims Commission. They are distressed at the length of time it has taken the Commission to dispose of its proceedings and consequently are anxious to provide a more expeditious settlement for Alaska. At the same time they are aware that the total value of all of the awards made by the Commission to date is roughly $282 million, and that the Court of Claims placed a value of only $7.S million on practically all of Southeast Alaska. Accordingly, they will not be easily convinced that the claims of the Natives of Alaska should be valued at $500 million.

In addition, they have handled scores of bills authorizing the expenditure of judgment awards by Indian tribes. They have been unwilling to give tribal leaders a completely free hand in spending this money, and have seen fit to require that the Secretary of the Interior approve their plans.

They are also well aware of the vast acreages of Indian lands that have gone out of Indian ownership, often at small fractions of market value, and are reluctant to legislate a settlement that does not provide adequate safeguards to prevent the recurrence of this experience.

You should also bear in mind that the next Secretary of the Interior, whether he be a Democrat or Republican, will not be a completely free agent. He will, hopefully, be your advocate as I have endeavored to be to the best of my ability. At the same time in this role he will be faced, as I have been, with the job of presenting your case to others within the Administration who have competing responsibilities and do not share his viewpoint. He will be faced with the task of recommending a settlement that will provide the maximum opportunity for Native initiative, management, and control, while at the same time providing a measure of protection that will guarantee that the fruits of any settlement are equitably distributed among the Native people and that they are not dissipated without lasting benefit.

Finally, the next Secretary will be faced with the very difficult decision as to whether to continue the land freeze.

I am well aware that under the terms of the State's Native claims legislation I must lift the freeze by next week if the Natives are to receive any benefits. My views on the land freeze are well known. Frankly, I do not believe we would have made any significant progress on the Native claims issue if we had not held everybody's feet to the fire, or perhaps I should say to the ice, with the freeze. As I have said many times before, I do not intend to lift it. While I believe that one objective of the State legislation was to obtain Native support for the lifting of the freeze, I believe that it should also be construed as a good faith offer by the State of assistance to the Native people. If that view is correct, I would expect that the offer will be renewed subsequently by the State in a form that will complement the federal legislation.

As you know, the U. S. District Court recently ruled against us on that part of the freeze involving our refusal to patent State selections. Our lawyers tell me that we have a good case and we intend to appeal. I am hopeful, however, that the appeal will become moot through the speedy enactment of claims' legislation.

There is one facet of the freeze on which I have had very little to say -the purported revenue loss to the State of Alaska, because of our failure to issue oil and gas leases. It has been argued that the State has been deprived of its 90 percent share of the SO-cent per acre rental that is received under these leases. - However, I would like to point out that under the present law virtually all leases on public lands in Alaska, including millions of acres which are believed to have great oil and gas potential, must be issued on a non-competitive basis. We are hopeful that Congress will soon see fit to revise this anachronistic law so that the Government can obtain fair market value for its resources. In the meantime, it is just not good management for the Federal Government to lease valuable acreage non-competitively that would doubtless bring bonuses running into hundreds of millions of dollars if it could be leased competitively. While the State might obtain several millions of dollars in the short run by our leasing, it would do so at the expense of losing many times that amount in the long run.

In closing, I would like to thank Howard Rock and Emil Notti once again for their kind invitation to be with you at this impressive gathering. I am hopeful that next time we meet it will be to celebrate the enactment of legislation resolving the Native claims issue.