

Mr. HALEY. Senator, we are glad to welcome you here this morning. We have many fine people here from your small State. We are glad to have you here. We hope that we can hear all of the witnesses. I have asked them to be as brief as they possibly can; but you have the floor and we are glad to have you.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ERNEST GRUENING, A U.S. SENATOR FROM
THE STATE OF ALASKA**

Senator GRUENING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I did not intend to make any statement.

I think my views on this legislation are very well known. I think this is legislation that is long overdue. The promise that is now hopefully going to be fulfilled dates from the organic act of 1884 which stated specifically that the natives and others would not be disturbed in the possession of the lands held or claimed by them and that the disposition of this matter was left to Congress.

Well, we are getting close to a century after that and the promise has not yet been fulfilled. I am very hopeful that it will be fulfilled in the very near future.

I know of no more important issue confronting the people of Alaska than this. The condition of the natives is one of poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, inadequate conditions of living and it must be rectified. There will be some question as to whether the latest bill sent up by the Interior Department is a satisfactory one. I much preferred the previous bill which was drafted by the task force appointed by Governor Hickel, but the disposition of this legislation, of course, rests with the members of the two committees in the House and the Senate and of the Congress. I am hopeful action will be speedy, that it will be generous and that we may conclude this issue early in the next Congress.

It is obviously too late for us to do it in this session, but these hearings should be very helpful in laying the groundwork for the action which I trust will be taken just as soon as Congress reconvenes in January. As a Member of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, I will be in a sense a judge, a listener, and I certainly want to hear all the pros and cons of this particular legislation. It has some obvious defects. Those of us who have followed the relationship of the Bureau of Indian Affairs with the native people feel that it is time they were given a greater freedom and independence from the Bureau's control which has been exercised now for nearly a century and has not resulted in the progress we feel should have been made.

I think this is one of the items that will be certainly brought to the attention of this committee.

If I may be a listener from now on, I will appreciate it.

Mr. HALEY. Thank you very much.

Are there any questions?

Mr. ASPINALL. I want to welcome our personal friend and coworker, Senator Gruening, before this committee.

May I say, Senator, I believe that is the most effective presentation that has been made by a Member of the other body before this committee for a long time.