

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. HICKEL: I'm going to give President Nixon credit for this because I'm going to tell you exactly how it happened. I didn't want that job but (indiscernible), and in April of 1969, called a meeting at the White House, about six people. He had BOB, he had Justice, he had Commerce -- BOB Justice, Commerce, State, and myself. This is (indiscernible). And every one of them gave him a very articulate reason why the Native Land Claims didn't need (indiscernible). Justice did on the legal basis. There's no legal -- there was no legal obligation. BOB did on the budget. The State did it on it was a country and this whole background. And when it finally was over, at that point he said, "Well, let's hear from Wally." I was the last guy to talk. And he structured it that way. He didn't know what I was going to say, I'm sure. And I told him I agreed with BOB and I agreed with State and I agreed with Commerce and I agreed with the Justice. It wasn't a legal case, a money problem, all of that. And I said, "Mr. President, all those things are true. This is a moral issue, not a legal issue." And he cut everybody off at that point. There was no oil company, no nothing, no pipeline involved. He says, "I'm going with Wally." Turned around, dismissed the thing, and says, "Go." And then a lot of comments in the -- in the 20 years since then, that he did that on account of the pipeline, and that's not true. Now, I know that. The pipeline wasn't even an issue then. You see, this is April '69, and that decision was made right then. And I always said that if President Nixon did it, did nothing else -- and he and I had all our problems -- I said, "He solved that issue right then," and I'll never forget it when I said -- I agreed with everybody, I wasn't argumentative. But I said, "Mr. President, this is a moral issue." And he -- I didn't even get it out of my mouth. He dismissed the rest of them (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Right. He was surprisingly good on Indian issues --

MR. HICKEL: Hey, let me tell you, he carried that job. And that at no time, whenever I recommended anything, would he even question me on that issue. So I'm just making a point in history because I'm getting tired of them saying they settled that on the account of the pipeline. That's a bunch of bullshit. I can say that.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: It might have been the up, down, or mixed up somewhere, where the oil industry said, "Do this or that." But let me tell you, you see, he signed that in December of '74, and there's a still a tape somewhere when we met out at University when he talked to him on the phone.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Right.

MR. HICKEL: You probably got -- maybe have that tape or something. But anyhow, the pipeline bill was signed in February of '80 -- of '74. This was December '71. I'm giving you a little background not for any other reason -- because I don't want to color it.

MR. MITCHELL: Well --

MR. HICKEL: And that's a fact.

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. MITCHELL: Well, that's -- one of the things that I'm really quite excited about --

MR. HICKEL: Yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: -- is that enough time has gone on that -- that President Nixon's papers are now open in the archives. And I have not been (indiscernible) but I --

MR. HICKEL: I can just -- I have a retentive mind. I don't write a lot, but I can verbalize that whole meeting, and that -- that was it. And he had -- well, he was a very complex person, a brilliant man, totally insecure, and that's what got him, listened to the hate and fear. He had two sides, the light and dark. I'm -- I can play on the light side better than anyone else. He wouldn't want no one else around when I was there. Never lost a battle, ever, I took to the President, and that was a problem. Then he had the dark side, and he was comfortable with the dark side. Kissinger played on his dark side better than anyone else. He destroyed the guy playing on his dark side. And the staff played on his dark side because it got his attention quicker. His light side is the side I worked on, and Bill Rogers could do it well. And he loved it, that was that Native Claims. He did -- he'd just go after that, and so the complexity got him in trouble because more people played on his dark side, which he was comfortable with. Insecure men are -- are very comfortable on the dark side, insecure men.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: And so -- that's enough of the Native Land Claims, but I wanted to give you that little bit of touch in there.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. Well --

MR. HICKEL: Because that was real.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, sort of one of the things going back to the -- to --

MR. HICKEL: Let's go before that day.

MR. MITCHELL: Sure. The beginning of all this that I've been curious about is that people up here forget now because the Republican party obviously has such a dominant presence in our political system. But, certainly, prior --

MR. HICKEL: It didn't then.

MR. MITCHELL: -- prior to your election in '66 --

MR. HICKEL: That's right.

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.

<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. MITCHELL: -- particularly on a statewide basis, it seems that Senator Gruening and the rest of these people had a lock on things. And I've been through the vote returns of your '66 election, and it was -- obviously, you won by a little more than a thousand votes.

MR. HICKEL: Sure.

MR. MITCHELL: And you did, obviously, well in Anchorage and Fairbanks. But you didn't really get killed in the bush?

MR. HICKEL: I understand that.

MR. MITCHELL: In fact -- in fact, in the Interior, you actually, I think, won the Interior election district. So I guess, first question I have is that -- that Stew Udall had started putting the -- the freeze on state sections in '62. So there'd been five years of nothing going on with land claims prior to that election. And did the Native land issue play a role in -- in your strategies for the '66 election or --

MR. HICKEL: Not necessarily as much as I was running as a unifier and not a divider. The Democratic party, which I was very close to, nationally and otherwise, used the Native Land Claims and that whole issue as a -- as a scam a little bit. And like, when Udall -- we had a meeting in Fairbanks -- well, I don't want (indiscernible) --

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: Before the election, it was basically -- he was placating. He was, like, nice little boys listened to him and didn't do anything. It'd been going on for years. And the old attorney in Juneau that used to come up and see me, the old man, helped me out.

MR. MITCHELL: Native or --

MR. HICKEL: No, white guy. Always handled the Native claims. Gray hair, old man.

MR. MITCHELL: Oh.

MR. HICKEL: (Indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Lefty -- was he -- he was in Anchorage?

MR. HICKEL: He was in Juneau, I think. He lived in Juneau, Seattle --

MR. MITCHELL: That was Bill Paul?

MR. HICKEL: Bill -- Bill Paul, right. Yeah. Well, you see, he fought that with his heart.

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: And -- but they placated him. That -- that was probably too much of a put-down. But they weren't -- they never grabbed -- grabbed the issue. So Johnson, the President, told Udall he'd okay 185 million on royalties on the intercontinental shelf. But, shit, there weren't any royalties. You know, royalties on nothing is nothing. And I told Udall that. And so -- and I'm getting a little ahead of myself.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: So in '66, I knew all this stuff, but I didn't placate him. I ran for opening up the arctic and economic development and I was looking at the state as an owner's state more than a government managed thing. See, this owner state thing, I'm on the book on. But I (indiscernible) that for years, you know. And so it's -- but the complicated thing, people don't want to accept it. It's socialism. Well, bullshit. It's not. You know, I know what it is. So I -- understanding that, I could communicate exceptionally well with the older Native people. The tribal heads, they liked it. I could talk that language. So my point was, it wasn't a Native Land Claims issue as much as my understanding then. And I didn't get a lot of vote? But I was accepted. They didn't dislike me.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: They didn't know me, but they didn't dislike me. And so that's up to '66, and that's the reason. But I had ran two statewide elections before that.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. And we're --

MR. HICKEL: That Republican thing, and I had to run against the Republican Party the first time. Well, the Natives didn't particularly like or dislike me for doing that. They liked the freedom of my being able to do it. I just said, "This is what I'm going to do." Especially in that Nome election in '58. And so that's sort of the background. But I was always comfortable with those tribal leaders. See, I didn't placate them.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. Well, now, after you were elected in '66, obviously, early '67, you appointed Donald Burr as your attorney general at that point.

MR. HICKEL: That's right.

MR. MITCHELL: And -- and I know that --

MR. HICKEL: He didn't last long.

MR. MITCHELL: -- he didn't last long. But --

MR. HICKEL: That was part of the reason.

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. MITCHELL: -- he did last long enough to -- to start the test case on the Nenana selections. And I was wondering, how did all that come about?

MR. HICKEL: I'll tell you, right after I was elected, remember I took the federal government to court?

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: On the land claims.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: And I told Don Burr that, by God, I'm going to help settle this issue. And then I -- I brought in a young Native, Maury Thompson. I carried him all the way through it. And I put Byron Mallott and Willie Hensley and all -- on the (indiscernible) commission; do you remember that one?

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Well, that comes -- that's later in '67.

MR. HICKEL: Well, it's -- yeah, that's my point, yeah. Well, Don Berthing, he is a very good man, but he instinctively didn't have a feel for it and didn't think he had anything coming. There was a meeting in Fairbanks where he gave a speech, basically telling Natives they didn't have any rights.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: I fired him. Very quietly. I just called on him and brought in (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Now --

MR. HICKEL: Go ahead.

MR. MITCHELL: -- Boyko actually sort of came on the scene -- I mean, there was a lag time when Ed came in and he was a special assistant.

MR. HICKEL: That's right.

MR. MITCHELL: Burr was still there, and then Burr --

MR. HICKEL: That's exactly right.

MR. MITCHELL: -- eventually left. Did you hire Ed, then, as a response to the sort of a mess that Burr was making in land claims or how did it work?

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. HICKEL: No. I hired -- I'll tell you why I hired Ed Boyko, because he's a creative -- he's a creative, unfearful -- that's not a good word right now -- attorney. And he was a Democrat, but he had an instinct -- I operate by instinct. He had a -- he felt comfortable with taking the federal government to court and the Native Land Claims issue to fight it. He was comfortable. Don Burr is a very competent attorney, but he wasn't as comfortable. Do you see my point?

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: And so you have to have that -- you have to have a real feel for what you're doing to win. You can win with brains alone. But on these big issues -- like I'm taking to the President, and saying it's a moral issue. You can win it on -- on brains alone, but you don't -- these emotional issues, you've got to feed them.

MR. MITCHELL: Did -- was it -- was it Burr's idea to file the test case --

MR. HICKEL: Oh, no.

MR. MITCHELL: -- or was that your idea?

MR. HICKEL: I told him.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

MR. HICKEL: You know -- and -- because I -- I knew where he was coming from, and he basically didn't think they had a case, you know. He meant it, sincere. I don't think there's anything else there, I'm not sure. But I -- after the speech in Fairbanks -- you'll have to get that time. I can't remember that time.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Well, that was -- that was in early -- there had been the 1966 October meeting of the Native community. And then they went up to Fairbanks to continue to try and get organized. And -- and I know that Burr showed up for that meeting --

MR. HICKEL: That case that you said Burr filed, give me a little background on that.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, what -- what it was, was State of Alaska v. Stewart Udall.

MR. HICKEL: Yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: And what it challenged, basically, was that the Interior Department had refused to process state land selection applications --

MR. HICKEL: That's right. We took him to court.

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. MITCHELL: -- at Nenana. And the reason that they had done that was because there had been protests filed from the local Native community saying, "Hey, we use and occupy these lands."

MR. HICKEL: Yeah. I remember that now.

MR. MITCHELL: (Indiscernible) selecting.

MR. HICKEL: See, what I -- I remember that now. What I did first -- the first thing with it was file a suit against the federal government, name the Secretary of Interior.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: And the Nenana case -- and now I remember that. I get -- I've got to go back to my file. That case in Nenana, I didn't want him to file it against the Natives. You know, I'm saying, "Hey, there's a problem here." Now I remember that. But there was a speech in Fairbanks -- he said, "Well, let that -- let's make that a test case because you already filed a suit against the federal government" -- it's coming back to me now -- "on the (indiscernible) illegal and so let's -- let's go that route." But the one I remember the most was when I gave the speech in Fairbanks, and it was anti -- sort of anti-Native. Did you follow my --

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: I'd have to get that somewhere to follow. And with no malice aforethought, I just thought, "Hey, I operate from this thing (indiscernible) really believe in what you're doing or you don't win."

MR. MITCHELL: All right. Well, now, obviously, you filed at that point in -- by early '67, a lawsuit against Secretary Udall over the land freeze.

MR. HICKEL: That's right.

MR. MITCHELL: And throughout the spring of that year, the Interior Department was trying to put together its first land claims bill. And I was wondering, what -- did you have any dealings with Secretary Udall at that time? How were you guys getting along?

MR. HICKEL: Udall came up and we talked, flew to Fairbanks together. And he had his prepared speech, and he threw it away because I gave my speech (indiscernible). And that's when he told me about the 100 -- 185 million on the outer continental shelf -- and how many acres of land was that? Eight, twelve?

MR. MITCHELL: Yeah. Eight to twelve.

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. HICKEL: And -- and I remember -- I remember, as clear as I can remember, in the speech I totally opposed to that approach because it was -- I didn't criticize the bill as much in the speech as I did the approach, the idea. And Udall threw his speech away. We talked about what the President (indiscernible) President said, "Yes," to the 185 million revenue of the outer continental shelf. And -- and there was nothing.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Well, I know earlier that -- that spring, I've seen some memorandums - - memoranda in Senator Bartlett's files that, apparently, you had gone back to Washington and had met with Senator Bartlett and Secretary Udall, and this was prior to -- to the Department coming up with its first bill.

MR. HICKEL: That's right.

MR. MITCHELL: What --

MR. HICKEL: I told them we had a settlement. And I was hoping they would. I didn't want to, you know -- but I didn't think -- I don't want to talk -- say too much (indiscernible) but I didn't think he really wanted to settle it.

MR. MITCHELL: Didn't have the political will to face up to it?

MR. HICKEL: Yes. It was -- it was an ongoing thing. It was -- it was a political gesture. But it wasn't -- it wasn't really meant -- I don't think they meant it. You know, I was sensing that. Bob did, but -- but he couldn't come up with the convening thing, you know. But Udall's heart was right, I think, and I think the gesture with the President was right. And they said, "Well, let's -- let's give them something. 185 million." And anyhow, that was it.

MR. MITCHELL: Well --

MR. HICKEL: I wish I could remember more, but I remember that.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Well, I guess the -- the next major event that occurs -- and it's interesting in terms of how the bill finally became law, looking back on it, is in late '67, you and -- and Ed Boyko organized this task force group.

MR. HICKEL: Right.

MR. MITCHELL: And I guess the question -- I guess the first question is, why did you do that? Was that a recommendation from Boyko to you? Did you think that up?

MR. HICKEL: My -- my idea. (Indiscernible) poor Boyko ever got there. I brought Thompson in and we started formulating, "How do we get these people involved?" And my feeling for him was back to '54, to the mayor of Savoonga. And I saw the pathetic thing. I'm up there -- this was '54; it was a long time ago. In fact, he was in the hotel about three weeks ago and came to see

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

me. He's still there. (Indiscernible). And my problem wasn't with any local thing; my problem was the federal government. And we saw a Russian ship out there, and it looked like a floating city, all (indiscernible). And he made a statement I'll never forget. I've quoted it many times. He's looking out there, not talking to me; he's talking to himself. And he says, "They fish all the time and we don't even know what's there." They're standing on that little -- looking out at Savoonga, and he was -- it was not what he said but the way he said it. And I said, "Well, I'll get those bastards someday." And I meant because the federal government -- our government was so rich, they didn't need us. And they didn't need the food of the Pacific, we had given too much farm stuff. And so they were literally trading our rights for bases around the world, to be friendly. I'm making a very -- you tracking me?

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, no. I -- I know quite a bit about the whole history of all that.

MR. HICKEL: Well, that was the whole thing. And so that's where my first thoughts came in about the problem of the Arctic. And I became -- I started, then, to become more of a student of the Arctic, and that's where I spent most of my life thinking, you know, that -- not -- not the confrontational thing, but why? One is, we're not needed or weren't. And two, America is basically our competitor. So our economic ties aren't with America, they're with Asia. It was that same time that I started working with Sauseama (phonetic) and we could -- we could finally have some ties with Japan, but we couldn't even get past Seattle because they were our competitor and they owned us, and so that whole middle thing came together. I'm trying to give you a feel for what happened. And so the World of (indiscernible) thing had to do with the people I knew in the bush, which weren't that many, and how do we get them involved. And that's why I got a young Hensley, and I didn't know him that well, and Byron Mallott, that whole group. I think there was 25 of us.

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, there's a whole bunch, yeah.

MR. HICKEL: Yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: At least 25.

MR. HICKEL: I said, "Sit down, let's talk about the problem." And Boyko turned out to be the right guy because he has the instinct for fairness. He's a fighter. And so --

MR. MITCHELL: Well, now --

MR. HICKEL: -- that's sort of how it came.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Now, one of the things that came out of that, interestingly enough, was it was the first 40-million-acre bill, which, obviously, is the way it ended up. And that was not the way that the group started out. And I've -- I've gone through and reread the press clippings of -- of all that, and -- and you stood up at the end of that process and said, "Yes. I agree that a 40-

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

million-acre settlement would be fair here." Was there -- was that difficult for you? Was that a major --

MR. HICKEL: No. I tell you what, the land thing was a little more difficult than the money. Greg Waiver (phonetic) and Goodwill Rogers's (phonetic) old statement that, "My land ain't making (indiscernible)." And so the land thing -- well, I -- I talked to -- I talked to Scoop Jackson about that at great length, and Scoop was at 8 to 12 million acres to start with.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: Because he wants obtainable, not what's fair. The 40 million acres was a little more difficult than the money was. The money was absolutely no problem to me because money is doable. And the 40 million acres didn't bother me because -- I'll tell you why. They made it -- you don't know the history, but I -- I fought against the statehood bill in '52. You don't know that.

MR. MITCHELL: No, I've been through all the statehood stuff.

MR. HICKEL: Okay. Well -- and I fought Atwood on that (indiscernible) Hickel (indiscernible) along instead of (indiscernible). Anyhow, I'm back there. Bartlett's there, Gruening's there, and Atwood's there, Truman's present, and I've never been there in my life. And so I went and made my plea for the land because we weren't going to get our resources (indiscernible), Land Act of -- I'm not an attorney, I'm just a kid, you know. I'm not an attorney today, although I'm no longer a kid. Anyhow, land was always an issue with me. But now, I've got 100 million acres; that's -- we committed that bill. I'm -- I'm (indiscernible). Egan (phonetic) was against -- to start with, we've got a great amount of land, and then he came along, here's a thought, it's another way to get land from the federal government and get it back into something we can do something with. And so the 40 million acres became acceptable even in Congress because a lot of people in Congress said, "My God," you know, "How are you ever going to use land privately up there?" And so that little bit of buff helped turn that a little bit. See my point?

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, sure.

MR. HICKEL: That thought. And -- and then Wayne Aspinall -- funny how God helps you, and this helped in the bill now, this helped a lot of things. In 1954, I made my second trip to Washington. I was elected national committeeman. Wayne Aspinall is a Democrat, and I never knew him (indiscernible). And he came up to see me. He says, "Would you cut a radio tape with me for my election?" And -- because I was an extroverted young liberal Republican. And so I cut that tape with him, and he never forgot it. And 14 years later, 15, he is the head of the committee, and I'm Secretary of Interior, and he -- became mine -- there was nothing he wouldn't do. So when we got on these battles, I had two great supporters, you couldn't buy them, Scoop Jackson and Wayne Aspinall. And Wayne Aspinall, every time he put something in that bill, he'd come see me, and he -- there was one thing he insisted on that I was kind of glad, I really liked it, and that is they have to have the opportunity to succeed, and they have to have the opportunity to fail, and that was that 20-year limitation. He -- and even after he retired, he use to fly up here to see

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

me, you know, in the mid-70s, late '70s. So what I'm saying, part of that came together because Wayne Aspinall had a lot of -- if I might say, a lot of mutual respect and confidence, and Jackson, same way. And Wayne Aspinall had as much to do with that Native Land Claims bill coming out like it did than anybody. I guess you know that.

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, sure.

MR. HICKEL: Okay.

MR. MITCHELL: I mean, it's -- you know, the -- Scoop actually had to use the House bill, when he went into conferences, as the template.

MR. HICKEL: I understand that.

MR. MITCHELL: And he did that, obviously, because of deferring to Aspinall's -- Aspinall's view.

MR. HICKEL: But anyhow, Aspinall went along with that idea, private lands. (Indiscernible) that way we get something away from the federal government, which is all-encompassing.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, it certainly turned out that way.

MR. HICKEL: That's exactly right.

MR. MITCHELL: You know, I mean, the Native community has not been shy about -- about dedicating their land entitlement to the --

MR. HICKEL: And you see, it fits into my whole thought of the owner state because it's really a collective society; you see my point? That's why that corporate thing, you know how they put it together, it's really private, but it's collective and that's what the Arctic -- how the Arctic works.

MR. MITCHELL: Well --

MR. HICKEL: I'm giving you too much bullshit.

MR. MITCHELL: No. No. No. I -- I find this stuff very, very helpful.

MR. HICKEL: Okay. Okay.

MR. MITCHELL: So I guess to go back for a second, as part of the task force --

MR. HICKEL: (Indiscernible) --

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. MITCHELL: -- activities, right, when you were still governor, the commitment you made at that time of 40 million acres before your secretary was obviously a major policy decision.

MR. HICKEL: Oh, it was. It was.

MR. MITCHELL: And -- and -- so that was not -- was that the subject of any controversy inside of the Administration? Or was Kelly or any of his people upset about that?

MR. HICKEL: There was controversy until you explained it. I didn't put up with an awful lot of controversy, not that I don't want it, but I couldn't explain -- I didn't want to -- I didn't want to educate everybody on the reasons. And a decision, if I might say this now, is the best education in the world. Once you make that decision, people will try to figure out why and how you made it, rather than have to convince them on everything. And I'm -- I'm a believer in that. You know, make it, and then let them -- if it's really wrong, you'll undo it, but it wasn't wrong.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, now -- now part of that --

MR. HICKEL: I had my -- I had my adversaries, quietly, but they were noisy.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, now, Stew Udall sent a fellow named Bob Vann up to participate -- I don't know if you remember him.

MR. HICKEL: I don't remember Bob.

MR. MITCHELL: He was -- he was the only real department representative from the Secretary's office that was -- that participated in the task force.

MR. HICKEL: I'd probably remember him; I don't.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Well, I guess the question is, when he walked out of -- of those final meetings with the task force, he indicated to the press that he thought that the Department of Interior, i.e., Stew Udall, could basically take the deal.

MR. HICKEL: Yep.

MR. MITCHELL: The compromise. And there was a hearing, obviously, the next summer in front of Senator Jackson, and Stewart went in and disowned 40 million acres. And I guess --

MR. HICKEL: I don't know who got to him?

MR. MITCHELL: Well, I guess the question was, did -- did you think at the end of the task force process that -- that there had been a deal here by all parties and we were through with this?

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.

<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. HICKEL: I -- no. Well, I can't remember. I just thought everyone accepted it. I didn't know if it was a deal. I thought it was accepted, but the bill didn't come out that way.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Well, I mean, certainly, the reason that the whole --

MR. HICKEL: I never -- never figured out why Udall took the -- went the other direction unless it was an administrative one.

MR. MITCHELL: As -- as I've been able to figure it out, he got overruled by the Bureau of the Budget.

MR. HICKEL: Oh, could have been.

MR. MITCHELL: And that's --

MR. HICKEL: Because he -- that's when Nixon said, "I don't care about the money," and Nixon bought that. And -- and I'm trying to think of the BOB guy's name. I thought he was just going to shift right there.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Well, I guess that gets --

MR. HICKEL: That's probably true; he probably got overruled.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. That gets us into the fall of 1968. And, obviously, there's been an election and Richard Nixon has defeated --

MR. HICKEL: Humphrey.

MR. MITCHELL: -- Humphrey and -- and you, who, obviously, at that point have been sparring with the Department of the Interior over the land freeze and other issues.

MR. HICKEL: Oh, I had taken them to court.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: That was a big issue at my hearing.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. I guess that's what I wanted to ask about --

MR. HICKEL: Yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: -- was -- was, suddenly, you have been nominated by the President to take over the reins of the --

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. HICKEL: (Indiscernible) history. You know, at my hearings they said, you know, that I not only had -- you know, I had not only taken the federal government to court, I had named the Secretary of Interior in the suit.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: Now I'm suing myself.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: "What are you going to do, Mr. Secretary?" They asked me.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. And I guess my question was -- I read the hearing record and -- and obviously you had to indicate on the record that -- that the freeze would stay for a couple year?

MR. HICKEL: That's right, I did, and I wasn't for that. But the President said, "Go along with" -- basically, no one said anything, they acquiesced. We could go -- I said we'd hold an audit during that session.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Now, did -- did -- I guess my two questions -- one would be, did you talk to the President about the policy with respect to the freeze --

MR. HICKEL: No.

MR. MITCHELL: -- during the confirmation thing?

MR. HICKEL: Not at the confirmation.

MR. MITCHELL: And then I guess the second thing would be, what -- what about Scoop Jackson? I assume you must have talked with him privately?

MR. HICKEL: Scoop and I talked about a lot of that. And I -- I said, "We'll hold" -- I said, "Mr. Chairman, we'll hold the freeze on during this session of Congress." And I said, "After that, if we can't settle the thing by that session of Congress, then we're not going ahead." You know, the funny part about that, I got fired two weeks before that session was held.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Right. And I guess -- well, you had mentioned earlier that the first Jackson bills were relatively conservative in terms of the amount of land.

MR. HICKEL: They were conservative.

MR. MITCHELL: Did -- was it your feeling that -- that Senator Jackson did not want to give out a lot of land? Or did --

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.

<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. HICKEL: No. I don't think so. I think he thought it was enough. I don't think he was devious. I don't -- you know, can't (indiscernible). I don't think he thought it was obtainable. I know that the money thing, everyone thought, "My God, he'll never reach it (indiscernible)." There was some -- there was some opposition to giving the Natives that much land. I can't remember exactly who and where, but there was opposition. You know, that subtle political thing in Washington, you don't know where it's at, but it's there. I don't -- I think Scoop probably took that out of the Udall bill. I don't -- I'm not sure. I do know that when it was all over the President publicly thanked me for that thing. I can't remember the step -- in my mind, I'm always about two or three years ahead of what I'm doing. Native Land Claims was through when I got (indiscernible) from the President. I think that way. I fight up to this point, real hard, way back here, nobody knows about it, and finally I get here, and then I don't dwell on this thing and I go this way. And then I back up and see how it's going now. To me, it's over. It's a little like the pipeline. I've been on it 8 years, and God, it was 80. Now, I'm -- I'm -- you know, it's kind of (indiscernible). And so the Native Land Claims -- the land mark was in April 1969. There wasn't even a bill then. But if that was -- to me, it was over. You know how I think -- it's like when you know you're going to marry your wife, you may not get married for two years, but it's over.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. Well, I guess that --

MR. HICKEL: Psychologically I'm trying to tell you that, yes, I was definitely involved all the time, but it was over in my mind.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. That, basically, Nixon had made the commitment --

MR. HICKEL: That's exactly right.

MR. MITCHELL: -- that we're going to solve it and that's --

MR. HICKEL: And he says, "I'm going with Wally." In other words, they'd call me up and I'd tell them what I thought, and I pushed it out the door to take care of it; it's over. And I, basically, was that way with the Interior Committee, both of them. I told you about Aspinall and Jackson. I can't remember details of -- but no matter if I'd see him socially or what, you know, we'd make some points and (indiscernible) at the hearing.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Well, now, I guess the last major --

MR. HICKEL: Is that becoming clear to you?

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, sure. Sure. Sure. That -- the last major event of -- of the '68 period that actually ended up having a lot of -- of importance to how the details of the claims act worked --

MR. HICKEL: Yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: -- was your decision to appoint Ted to take Bartlett's seat.

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. HICKEL: That's right.

MR. MITCHELL: And it would have turned out completely different in the end, I think, if Senator Stevens hadn't been there.

MR. HICKEL: Well, let me tell you why I did that. Because -- I'll just give it to you in one simple form. He wasn't that much of a friend, but he was (indiscernible). Ted Stevens is a survivor, and I knew that. He was a young guy, but he's the kind of guy that's a survivor. And Elmer Rasmuson might have done a better job for a year or two, or Carl Brady might have done a better job down the road, but they would become locked in on this on their viewpoint. That doesn't make them bad. Ted Stevens is just exactly what I said, he's a survivor. And he's not a PR person. He's the opposite, but I -- but I knew he was my majority leader in the Senate.

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: And he knew how to get things done. He was -- he listened to creative thoughts, and was kind of creative himself. And so when I -- and it was a difficult decision. Oh, boy, because he had lost two elections.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. And he had just lost to Elmer in the primary, right?

MR. HICKEL: In the primary, it was tough. My wife helped me with that. Jack Coghill made one comment -- Jack's an old friend; that surviving thing, totally agree. In fact, he came up with a thought to get this whole thing. And so -- and Ted was very insecure with me for many years, because I appointed him. Very insecure. I never bothered him with that. In fact, he supported Hammond in the '70 election, and he lived with regret because I didn't even say anything. People just -- it was tough on him. He shouldn't have done that. But that's why I appointed him. He's a good battler. He had -- he didn't support me in the '66 election; he supported (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Now, he'd been, I guess, a Rockefeller Republican at one time --

MR. HICKEL: That's right.

MR. MITCHELL: -- when -- when you were involved (indiscernible) -- or was it Nixon or Goer --

MR. HICKEL: I was a Rockefeller when Goer (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: It was one or the other, I (indiscernible) --

MR. HICKEL: Yeah. He was -- he was a Rockefeller -- oh, he was -- in '64 -- in '64, I -- I wasn't for Goer. I -- I stayed out of that one. That wasn't winnable. But, Ted, that's the reason I

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

appointed Ted. He was spirited, survivor -- basically, a survivor. That was Thad, who turned out to be a great (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Well, I guess the last issue and I'll let you go is, I've always been curious about your understanding of how you got appointed secretary. The little research I've done is there was some governor of Montana or something who was the (indiscernible) --

MR. HICKEL: Let me tell you, there was two things. One, I can't be (indiscernible), I wasn't looking for a job. I turned the job down when they first asked me. I think it's in my book; I'm not sure. I turned it down. And he asked me if I'd keep an open mind. And I said, "I'll keep an open mind." And then Nixon received a lot of money, I found out later, from the oil industry. And I had a short record -- a good record of being able to handle (indiscernible) the Kenai refineries. (Indiscernible) Miller said it didn't make any sense and pushed me down and wouldn't bid on it. Anyhow -- and the way I'd take reading (indiscernible). That's what I did. That impressed him. And God only knows we never knew Santa Barbara was coming out. It came out four days later. But it was that ability to maintain that freedom and be free, and Nixon made that choice himself because you don't go with the cabinet without a constituency. I didn't have any constituency. John Whitaker told me in a transition (indiscernible) many years later that Roger Morton was the guy that they just knew was going to be appointed. He was the guy. And Babcock was sort of second because he was a westerner and they wanted a westerner.

MR. MITCHELL: He was the governor of --

MR. HICKEL: Montana.

MR. MITCHELL: -- Montana. Right.

MR. HICKEL: If they had to be -- one, Morton had the lead of all the political stuff, and they announced it, in fact; they announced Morton. And so it got down -- it got a division in the transition team. And Nixon came in and said, "You haven't sent me the right guy," and Whitaker said, "Mr. President" -- well, we don't know, he never said a word. He just wrote upside down, "Hickel." Whitaker told me that. He said, "Jesus Christ, it shocked them all." There was no constituency there except him. I wasn't that close to Nixon but I knew him well, and I was straight with him. I wasn't trying to ever sell him. I wasn't looking for a job. That goes back to -- hell, before he was ever running, I had a meeting with him once and told him (indiscernible) senator (indiscernible). My point is, that's as close as I know about how I got it.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Well, I very much appreciate the time. I guess the -- I'd like to maybe come back in about eight or ten months after --

MR. HICKEL: Okay.

MR. MITCHELL: -- I've had a chance to go through your papers --

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. HICKEL: Sure.

MR. MITCHELL: -- and the archives --

MR. HICKEL: You might find things there that I don't remember.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Well, I've had a lot of fun going back and doing this stuff.

MR. HICKEL: Because I was a very -- activist, you know. So I can't -- I can't remember it all, but --

MR. MITCHELL: Well, I guess, last question and I'll let you go, just out of curiosity, is how do you think all this stuff has turned out? If --

MR. HICKEL: Very well.

MR. MITCHELL: -- if you had to do it over again, would you do --

MR. HICKEL: Wouldn't do much. I don't know if -- a lot I'd do over. I would -- I had an argument with Cleppy (phonetic) about the public right of ways on rivers and streams. I wanted to let them use what they wanted, but I wanted the public right where they hadn't had historical rights, the public to have a half a mile on both sides of the rivers, and Cleppy says, "No. 25 feet is enough, let them buy the rest," and that pissed me off.

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. But other than the easement --

MR. HICKEL: That's a small thing. The amount of land, no. The money, no. I -- they need to clean up a little bit of what I thought was an abuse of their rights under land (indiscernible) stuff. I -- I posed that on (indiscernible). I said, "That belongs to all of us. It doesn't belong to just 25 percent." I can be pro-Native Land Claims, but I'm not -- I would not -- if I thought they were abusing it, I'd be against it. We came out strong against that.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, how -- how about the -- the sort of unfettered opportunity that they had with the money that, obviously, particularly at a village level, there's been a lot of --

MR. HICKEL: They've really (indiscernible) you can't legislate that. That's one of the things that Wayne Aspinall got to vote, and that's why he said they have the right to -- we must give them the opportunity to succeed, but they also have to have the opportunity to fail. And that -- that's why he had that 20-year deal, so they wouldn't squander that. And we talked about the money, and he says, "That's a human thing. If they squander that, we can't legislate that." You know, and they did lots of that, but some of them didn't. You know --

MR. MITCHELL: Right. But what's interesting about that, though, is that, obviously, Congressman Aspinall had -- had been involved with Indian issues in the Congress for 20 years.

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. HICKEL: Years, that's right.

MR. MITCHELL: And -- and if you go back and you look at all of the Indian bills that he was involved in, he always had Department of Supervision over the money.

MR. HICKEL: I understand that.

MR. MITCHELL: Even through the Tlingit/Haida settlement.

MR. HICKEL: This one he didn't.

MR. MITCHELL: And he cut it loose --

MR. HICKEL: (Indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: -- this time.

MR. HICKEL: He knew where I was coming from. I wanted -- if you got just a moment --

MR. MITCHELL: Sure.

MR. HICKEL: -- I'll tell you where I was coming from. I wanted this to become a country and not a state. And that was one of the things I (indiscernible) -- I went back to see Truman about -- never saw (indiscernible). Never met either one of them. I really wanted this to be a country. And so Aspinall knew that. And I said, "We've had too much federal government. Mr. Congressman, I" -- "boy, I just" -- and so he listened. He listened. And I said, "Just give us a chance, goddammit." And I said, "goddammit." You know, and if we fail, we fail. I don't think the reservation system of guidance is worth a shit.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, certainly --

MR. HICKEL: And Roy Hun (phonetic) does a hell of a job.

MR. MITCHELL: Yep.

MR. HICKEL: And Willie's doing a good job, but someone made a mistake.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. But I guess, in terms of -- I guess my question, in terms of policy, is that -- is that that was a --

MR. HICKEL: (Indiscernible) --

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. MITCHELL: -- (indiscernible) everybody knew what they were doing at the time, that we're going to do this as an experiment --

MR. HICKEL: That's exactly it.

MR. MITCHELL: -- to get these people out from under the thumb of the bureau --

MR. HICKEL: We wanted to give them as much -- as close to the -- the system of America as we could. And I think -- looking back at it and having to run BIA and doing all those things I saw in the South 48 (sic), this one made a lot of mistakes, but goddammit, they're so much further ahead of the others, it's no comparison. That's the way I see it, you know. So --

MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Well, I very much appreciate the time, and --

MR. HICKEL: Okay. I'll see you again -- (Brief interruption.)

MR. HICKEL: -- that's bullshit. You see, they don't -- they have a right to lease it, and we manage it. If they don't manage it well, they go. And it's unlike Kansas or Oklahoma or anything like that. And same way I told them on this ELF thing, the same way I'm talking about taxes, they mix up ownership with taxes, and that is morally wrong because in the South 48, you pay a royalty, maybe 25 percent, whatever it is, you pay a royalty to an owner and then they come in and tax later. Up here, dammit, it bothered me because they mixed up taxes with ownership. They keep saying the taxes are so high. Well, I'm not going to argue that, but that royalty belongs to us without any taxes. It's an owner thing, and it's a tough battle, and that's why I formed Commonwealth North to fight that battle of -- of this unique difference of Alaska. And it is different. There's nothing like it in the world. It should have been a country. Because here you're taking -- America was founded as a free society, and free enterprise evolved out of free society. And government is -- was the adversary to the ownership, to keep it free. To keep it fair. And then we have a capital intensive system in a -- in a free democracy to make it work. I asked a question years ago, "How do you take a capital intensive society and make it function with total government ownership?" Now, that requires management. That's why I ran for governor in '66. And that's what I raised in the '50s. (Indiscernible) and damn near appointed me governor in '57. I said, "No. Get (indiscernible)." But we haven't faced that yet because we look out here and we think this is a private country. It's not. There's nothing private about it. It -- it -- it's a commune kind of thing, and in my book, I make a very clear statement of that. I don't know if you ever --

MR. MITCHELL: Oh, I've read it.

MR. HICKEL: Well, but I'll just show you the clear statement of what -- you see, 7/8ths of the world is always the one in common, and that's what saved me in Santa Barbara. And I said, "You know, you're not going to homestead part of the ocean; we -- this is ours." You know, and that was foreign to people. I said it to the media (indiscernible) in Santa Barbara. Well, it's true. I'll just read you two paragraphs. "The belief that we have too much government had been accepted without question by what must be a majority of America -- Americans of all political persuasion.

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

I totally disagree. "There may be too many people in government or government may be misdirected, but I will argue until I die that there is not enough government in those areas where life is being choked from living, transportation of cities and general environment." One more paragraph. "What we must now realize for the first time in America, is that it is really a collective world, but one in which we live so privately without concern for the other person or his desires and wants. Activities for strictly private gain become destructive, not only to others, but eventually to one's self. "No matter how -- how great, how vast, or how simple individual ownership might be, it must be looked upon as a passing thing. What good would it be if one owned it all and left an emptiness in passing? "In reality, one has but a lease on ownership during one's --" (Brief interruption.)

MR. MITCHELL: -- that obviously really represents, in terms of the communal nature of the ownership --

MR. HICKEL: Sure.

MR. MITCHELL: -- of the Native land base.

MR. HICKEL: No. That's exactly -- that -- that comes -- that came right out of the heart, you know. That's a belief. And so in -- in -- I know the Arctic world pretty well. I've traveled it all, from Finland to -- as far north as Finland and Point Barrow in Alaska, all the Canadian things, the Siberian things. And in a cold country, Antarctica, I haven't traveled, but will give you the same thing. Cold countries are basically collective, because the individual thing -- they're small populations, distances are vast. You can't get from here to there. Wickershane (phonetic) saw it. That's why we had the railroad from Seward to Fairbanks. Not to make a profit every 90 days, but to open up the country. And so governments in a -- in a cold country have to think collective, and that's why I'm so difficult to understand. You know, the son of a bitch is Republican, but he's not; he's a Democrat, he's not. You're not, you can't be. An ownership by government is foreign to American thinking. And ownership by government management is foreign to American thinking.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. Well, if you look at the fight over TVA that went on 20 years ago --

MR. HICKEL: Well, I understand. Well -- but this country here, if you don't have a government here that's an advocat (sic) instead of the adversary -- remember, I said, governments are adversarial. In Alaska, the last 16 years, we've had adversarial governments, but nothing can work if the owner is his own adversary. He's got to be an advocate to something. And that's why I have to do that next book some time because I'm not going to live long enough, really, to -- to influence that unless you're there. Because I was basically -- I thought like an owner when I was governor. I thought like an owner.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, speaking of owners, I had one thing that just came to mind, is that -- that, obviously, at the end of the claims act, you know, in '69, '70, '71, the presence of the oil industry lobby was quite obvious.

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. HICKEL: Oh, I --

MR. MITCHELL: Was the industry involved or concerned about the land claims during your tenure as governor? Did you --

MR. HICKEL: I wasn't aware of it, no. You see, I had it figured out how to get that right of way -- in fact, Moe Benson, 20th anniversary, a year ago, said if we would have listened to Governor Hickel, we would have been ten years ahead. I was going to take Wickershane's bill, which -- the President says, "This authorizes 1,000 miles of railroad in Alaska. It's primary purpose is to open up the country." I used that act -- we only had 500-some miles. I was going to take that to Prudhoe Bay, and the right of way would have been down the railroad right of way, and we wouldn't have had to fight that battle. That's what I would do; I was thinking like an owner. And it shocked a lot of people, but I was thinking -- I ran the state of Alaska as if we owned it.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. But I guess my -- my question is, none of the oil guys came in?

MR. HICKEL: Oil guys came in and -- and while I was secretary of -- or governor, I never saw any pressures to them on the Native Land Claim. Christ, Exxon didn't want to pipeline, period.

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Right. I know about that.

MR. HICKEL: I got to put -- oh, you didn't know about that?

MR. MITCHELL: No, I knew about that.

MR. HICKEL: Oh, yeah. I (indiscernible).

MR. MITCHELL: Right.

MR. HICKEL: And so the -- the land claims wasn't an issue because they didn't even want the pipeline. And -- and so the -- in '71, there might have been push because we brought Exxon to the mat, and we decided to go in August '70 -- 1970 with the pipeline, and I left right after that. I wasn't aware -- I don't think they were smart enough -- they might have been.

MR. MITCHELL: To understand the relationship between Native Claims and --

MR. HICKEL: Yeah.

MR. MITCHELL: -- and the pipeline?

MR. HICKEL: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I know that -- that they would do anything to get done what they wanted done. But I have to be honest with you, President Nixon's decision had nothing to do with the oil industry. I know that.

Donald Mitchell oral histories, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage. Walter Hickel interview, 1989 November 22. Transcript completed by Andrea Atkins.
<https://archives.consortiumlibrary.org/collections/specialcollections/hmc-1099/>

MR. MITCHELL: All right. But certainly, as governor, you didn't see their --

MR. HICKEL: No.

MR. MITCHELL: -- their fingerprints around the land claims issue?

MR. HICKEL: No. They weren't that friendly with me. You know, because of this -- you know, they were using the country. And I said, "That's no problem. But goddamn, don't -- you know, this is us."

MR. MITCHELL: Right. Right. Well, listen, I've taken up --

MR. HICKEL: Okay. (End of audio recording.) TRANSCRIBER'S CERTIFICATE I, Andrea Atkins, hereby certify that the foregoing pages numbered 1 through 51 are a true, accurate, and complete transcript of Interview, transcribed by me from a copy of the electronic sound recording, to the best of my knowledge and ability. Dated this 5th day of May, 2022.