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June 9, 1950

Hon. Herbert H. Lehman
 Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs
 Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Lehman:

The A.C.L.U. has long advocated statehood for Alaska as a means of giving full liberty and self-government to our fellow-Americans of that Territory. With equal vigor we will oppose any effort to use Alaskan statehood as a means of undermining or weakening the rights of Alaskan Natives. Among such rights, solemnly pledged by acts of Congress and in the treaty by which we acquired Alaskan Sovereignty, are the rights of the natives to be protected in their possessions and their right, assured by federal corporate charters, to control their own lands and their own affairs.

America will be deeply shamed if these rights do not receive the same full measure of protection in the Alaskan Organic Act that they have received in every other statehood act passed by the Congress and signed by the President during the past 70 years and more. Even the pending Hawaiian Statehood Bill honors this tradition by including special provisions guaranteeing native possessions (Hawaiian Home Lands) against interference by the future State of Hawaii.

It is a high and honored American tradition that makes the right of self-government of a new state depend upon its willingness to respect the rights of the most helpless minorities within its borders. That American tradition has world significance. It ought not to be abandoned in the year 1950, -- not even in the name of self-government for Alaskans.

May we have your assurance that you will do what you can to uphold this American tradition of freedom and tolerance by protecting the civil rights of our First Americans?

Sincerely yours,

HERBERT H. LEHMAN PAPERS
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Jay B. Nash
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Patrick Murphy Malin
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347

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