

Claims Hinges on Month—

June Crucial Month

Next month will be crucial determining the native land claims in the estimate of Edward L. Patton, president of the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. Settlement could come next summer, he said, "If we all work together."

Speaking last week under sponsorship of the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce, Patton said federal legislation was the only solution in lifting native injunctions filed against pipeline construction.

Al Wright, Al Wright's Air Service, asked if it would be possible to build the line if natives gave a waiver. Patton's answer was no; that if Steven's Village withdrew its suit he had indication another native association would file.

"What association?" Wright asked.

Patton wouldn't name one.

The pipeline builder said he did not believe his company should take a stand regarding the merits of any specific land claims legislation.

"But I believe the people of Alaska should give united and vigorous support to that bill which seems fair."

He noted Sen. Henry Jackson of Washington has proposed legislation which would guarantee pipeline right-of-way with claims settlement; but said Alyeska was against it.

"There are a block of people in Washington that just have it in for the oil industry regardless of the merits of the case. The na-

tives would lose, too, because if the bill doesn't pass we all go down together."

Queried on why most work on the line had been shut down he said, "We're only doing the things which will help get the permit."

On Sen. Ted Steven's statement that land claims and pipeline permit were not specifically tied together, Patton answered, "Ted is entitled to his opinion. This is the opinion of some high priced lawyers, I can tell you that."

In addition to the Stevens Village Suit, an injunction has been filed by the Wilderness Society, he pointed out. This suit will go before a federal judge, and if he decides against Alyeska, the case will go to trial.

"The thing could be in court for years," Patton said.

He spoke optimistically, however, about getting a construction permit by fall.

On a possible Canadian route he said, "I really don't think that route can be realistic and I don't think we should spend a whole lot of time worrying about it."

His estimate was that a Canadian pipeline would take 12-18 months longer to build than an Alaskan line. If Alyeska could go into full operation in the summer of 1972, he predicted completion of an Alaskan line in mid-1975.

"And if we're lucky we might beat that by a little bit."