

ADMINISTRATION

BILL SOON

Measure Expected to Be Generous in Land, Cash

An administration land claims bill, which is reported to be the most favorable to the Alaskan Natives ever proposed by the U.S. government is expected to be released before the end of the week by informed sources in Washington D.C.

The Nixon administration bill should provide for a land settlement of 40 million acres and a cash settlement of \$500 million plus mineral royalties which may bring the total cash settlement up to one billion dollars.

During the past weeks Alaska Federation of Natives President Don Wright has been in close contact with the Interior Department legal experts drawing up the land claims bill. Wright seemed highly pleased with the administration position last week.

The AFN will continue to press for a land settlement of 60 million acres in Congress, but is highly encouraged by a favorable government position. At present the AFN bill in Congress has attracted 20 cosponsors in the Senate at 14 in the House of Representatives.

According to Tundra Times sources, the administration bill provides for land and money to be distributed through one central corporation, which may be changed in further House and Senate work.

Meanwhile, reports for the last week have been that the administration announcement of its land claims settlement will be forthcoming very soon.

In Juneau, Alaskan state government officials are awaiting the administration announcement and the U.S. House Interior Committee Hearings on the bill expected to be scheduled soon after.

One major problem for the state government is what will be done about the claims and land rights of native villages located on land which is presently patented or tentatively approved to the state.

"The administration is anxious to make sure state law recognizes traditional rights of occupancy on such lands," said State Attorney General John Havelock when asked what the state proposed for these villages.

At present, at least one village, Mentasta Lake, is involved in a suit against the state pertaining to land rights. Alaska Legal Services which represents the village, will send a representative to Juneau this week to meet with the Attorney General to discuss the problem.

According to the Attorney General, his office has worked on various drafts of legislation and proposals to solve issues

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Bill Soon . . .

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of land rights of natives on state selected lands since early in the present legislative session. The question has been how these things relate to possible native claims settlements in Congress.

It may very well be, said the Attorney General, that enabling legislation will be necessary to solve this problem and assure these villages their property and land claims rights.

Meanwhile, in Washington D.C. at least one prominent NCIO executive who has been actively involved in the land claims fight and the advocacy of Alaskan Natives reports he is very pleased with the forthcoming administration position.

Sources believe that a meeting two weeks ago between Alaskan Native leaders, Vice President, Agnew, Secretary of the Interior Rogers Morton and other high administration officials contributed greatly to the present administration position.