

Act of Congress Seen as Solution To Land Problems

It will take an act of Congress to convey land and mineral rights to Alaska Natives in settlement of aboriginal land claims, Congressman Ralph Rivers told the Tundra Times this week.

Rivers is now back in Washington after touring the state with the Public Land Law Review Commission. The Commission held hear-

(Continued on Page 5)

Congress, Land . .

(Continued from Page 1)

ings in Kotzebue. Fairbanks, and Anchorage on Alaska Native land claims in the state.

"At Kotzebue I pointed out that it will take an act of Congress to authorize conveyance of land with mineral rights to the villages in settlement of aboriginal claims, and that it would be wise for them to agree to less acreage than they are presently demanding, or it will prove impossible to get the needed legislation through Congress."

Rivers said he was pushing for a "prompt" settlement of their land claims and felt that an allotment to each village of a "reasonable amount of acreage around each village" with sub-surface rights included plus a Federal cash payment in lieu of claims on more remote acreage.

"I pointed out that it would be wise for them to agree to less acreage than they are presently demanding, or it will prove impossible to get the needed legislation through Congress," the Congressman said.

"I stress that I stand ready to give every assistance to get such a moderate settlement in the near

future," he said, "which would be better for all concerned than seeing the matter deadlocked indefinitely."

Rivers was just back from the Kotzebue hearings of the traveling land commission. In Kotzebue, representatives of the Northwest Native Association recently laid claim to 30 million acres of Northwestern Alaska, including the potential mining areas along the Kobuk River east of Kotzebue.

The northwest claim along with the gigantic 96 million acre arctic claim entered by Barrow's militant North Slope Native Association and land claims filed by other groups in the state now mean that well over 60% of the state's total land area is under aboriginal claim.

Rivers also told the village groups in Kotzebue, he said, that he was being, "falsely accused of being against them."

The Democratic Congressman is running for re-election this year and is facing serious challenges both in the primary and general elections.

Mike Gravel, Democratic Speaker of the State House of Representatives, is making a strong bid for River's seat in Congress in the Aug. 23 primary elections.

Howard Pollock, Republican state senator from Anchorage, is bidding for River's seat on the GOP ticket.