

Churches Back Revenue Sharing

The Alaska Council of Churches, meeting in Kotzebue the last of February, went on record in support of State revenue sharing in the settlement of the native land claims issue and liberalized abortion laws.

The resolution on native land claims called for a just and equitable settlement that would include a cash grant, a grant of land, and an over-riding royalty on sub-surface mineral resources of the state.

The Alaska Council of Churches, with member communions including the American Baptists, Disciples of Christ, United Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran Church in America, United Methodist and the Salvation Army, has adopted resolutions of support for the land claims settlement of the claims from the National Council of Churches in December.

The national council represents the major Protestant and Orthodox bodies of the United States with a membership over 44 million persons.

On the subject of abortion, the Alaska Council voiced support for legislation to provide for legally constituted therapeutic abortion boards and a review of applications for abortions performed prior to the 20th week of pregnancy.

Liberal abortion proposals—with and without a statewide referendum—were narrowly defeated in the Senate Wednesday, but it was reported that plans were being made to introduce a new version.

The defeated bill would have made abortion a matter of medical practice until the 16th week of pregnancy and required approval of a hospital abortion committee after that. Present law prohibits abortion unless it is "necessary to preserve the life" of the mother.

In its statement, the Council said, "As Christians we should work for the day where every child will be born into a home where he is wanted and where there are adequate resources to help him develop into the full human being that God intended him to be . . . it is more immoral to allow the birth of a child into certain circumstances than it is to permit an abortion.

"It cannot be denied that the fetus is a form of human life, but weighing this with the value of the mother and the consequences

of a deformed or unwanted child himself, the greater love is served by permitting therapeutic abortions."

In other action, the assembly authorized the appointment and funding of a special study committee to examine the possible restructuring of the Alaska Council of Churches for a broader and more effective ministry.

The body also approved the co-sponsorship and funding for a team of college students from the University of Alaska who

will participate in a service project in a rural Alaskan village in late May.

A special scholarship fund that will bring children from remote Alaskan villages to urban areas of the state for a full week's camping experience was also authorized by the council. The special fund was made possible by a Christmas offering from Elmendorf AFB Chapels.

The next annual assembly of the council will be held in Sitka, Jan. 18-21, 1971.