

Aspinall Sours View—

Governor Egan Endorses AFN Bill

WASHINGTON D. C. (May 4) Alaska Governor William A. Egan today endorsed the land claims position of the Alaska Federation of Natives in hearings before the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee.

Governor Egan testified that the state favored a land settlement of 60 million acres, 2 per cent overriding royalty in oil and gas revenues and \$500 million federal appropriation to Alaskan

natives.

The Governor advocated that land patented to natives be contributed from state and federal government providing the greater share "in keeping with the

ultimate ratios of land ownership, the federal government should contribute at least twice as much from federal reserved land providing adequately for

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claims settlement," said Egan.

"Utilization of at least Petroleum Reserve No. 4 for this purpose is reasonable under the circumstances, particularly considering the continuance of Petroleum 4 is an anachronism and in addition another 17 million acres could be contributed from other federal withdrawals which surround existing native villages.

"This solution provides an aggregate of approximately 60 million acres of which up to 20 million are in effect contributed by the State," added Egan.

The state also indicated that it would agree to allow natives to select from land already tentatively approved to the state where native occupancy now exists.

In fielding questions posed by members of the committee, Governor Egan indicated the state did not object to the right of prior land selection by natives. The governor also gave support to the regional concept contained within the native position.

In his testimony on Monday, Secretary of State Rogers Morton also defended native self determination. Appearing on behalf of the administration, Morton stated the settlement of the Alaskan Native land claims is the last major outstanding claims on aboriginal title remaining in the United States.

"Congress has an opportunity to rewrite history with the enactment of this legislation," Morton said.

House Interior Committee members spent close to the entire day on Monday questioning Secretary Morton about the land settlement provisions of the administration bill. Committee Chairman Wayne Aspinall and subcommittee Chairman James Haley (D-Fla.) asked Morton to justify the 40 million acre land provision.

Morton said the 40 million acre figure was selected "after a review of all the proposals and because it seemed fair, equitable

and a subsistence opportunity for the natives."

In his opening address to the committee on Monday, Chairman Aspinall (D-Col.) warned that Congress is not "negotiating" with anyone in settlement of the Alaska Native land claims.

"Any legislation enacted should not be regarded as a negotiated contract with some native leaders," said Aspinall in his 11 point opening statement.

"The natives as a whole do not have a claim to anything," he said.

In his summary of the legal background of the claims issue Aspinall pointed out that, in his opinion, either all the native claims are valid, in which case they should be paid for the entire state of Alaska or they do not have a valid claim to the

entire state, in which case any settlement is "a matter of subjective judgement."

The senior members of the committee who questioned Secretary Morton were highly skeptical of the administration bill land provisions and of the concept of a single native corporation which they fear could become a political and economic force in the state.

Rep. John Saylor (R-Pa.), the ranking minority member of the committee observed that what Congress does here will be "watched by every Indian tribe in the lower 48 and the lawyers who represent them."

Scheduled to testify Tuesday and Wednesday were Don Wright President of the Alaska Federation of Natives, ASNA President Joseph Upicksoun and executive director Charles Edwardsen, Jr.