

Lively Session Expected at T-H Convention

Controversy over the manner in which the U.S. Government should distribute \$7 million to the Tlingit and Haida Indians will be aired in Anchorage this week when the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haidas gather for a three-day convention.

Sen. Ted Stevens, who has sponsored a distribution bill opposed by some of the Indians, will address the convention at 3:15 p.m. Saturday. Also, Congressman Howard Pollock will report to the group on Friday at 2 p.m.

Fifty-five delegates from 18 member communities stretching from Anchorage to California are scheduled to attend the meetings April 16, 17, and 18 in the Anchorage Westward Hotel.

Representing more than 14,000 Tlingit and Haida Indians, the Central Council is an organization created by Congress to develop plans relative to the disposition and use of \$7.5 million in judgment funds.

The money was awarded to them by the U.S. Court of Claims in 1968 for about 17 million acres of forest land taken from them by the U.S. Government.

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A bill providing for the disposition of these funds has already passed in the House of Representatives. It, along with a similar bill sponsored by Sen. Stevens, and another sponsored by Sen. Mike Gravel are currently in the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

President and general manager of the Central Council, John Borbridge, said that he did not expect quick action on the matter because the Senate committee is currently concerned with the Alaska Native land claims issue.

Alaska's two Senators have disagreed on the disposition of the funds. Stevens' bill requires that expenditures of money by the Central Council be subject to the supervision of the Secretary of the Interior while Gravel's bill waives such supervision.

Borbridge has said that he endorses the Stevens bill and the similar House bill as a tactical decision to avoid further delay in the distribution of the funds because of the immediate need to get the programs underway.

Tlingit leaders, Byron Mallott and Robert Willard, have criticized Borbridge's stand and have endorsed the Gravel bill.

Borbridge and other Central Council leaders are up for reelection at the meeting.

In connection with the judgment funds, the convention delegates will also discuss the formulation of and administration of Tlingit and Haida programs. The Central Council has received an \$80,000 technical assistance planning grant from the Economic Development Administration.

The effect of the grant, Borbridge said, will be to prepare member communities for their planning responsibilities and the development of two Tlingit and Haida planners who will be available to the Central Council after they have received training.

Also, on Thursday, the keynote speaker will be Dr. George Rogers, professor of Economics at the University of Alaska, who will comment on the changing role of the Alaska Natives in the 1970's.