

# STATE LAND BILL DUE FOR CHANGES IN HOUSE

By KEN REED

The State Native Land Claims Bill, HB 672, is due on the floor of the House of Representatives in a new form. The House Finance Committee will propose fundamental changes in the bill, putting a 50 year or \$50 million maximum on money that native groups could receive from the state.

The House Finance Committee substitute is also expected to limit the proposed 5 percent royalty payments only to "lands to be developed in the future," not making payments on lands which the state now receives revenues.

The bill will also require that native groups immediately set aside lands which will be lifted by the Secretary of Interior from the current

federal "land freeze." The lands must be lifted by the Secretary of the Interior by October 10, 1968.

Governor Walter Hickel called this 50 year or \$50 million maximum a "liberal and realistic settlement on the state's part. The bill has a price tag on it, and if the state is willing to share \$50 million, then the federal government has an obligation of many times that amount."

Representatives from the native groups felt that these terms were "rock bottom" limits which they could accept.

Rep. Willie Hensley (D-Kotzebue) said the "bill has very little chance of passage if it doesn't correspond to the original draft of the Task Force and the state's view. The State and Federal Governments will attempt to let as little money go to the natives as possible. This precedent has already been set by other legislatures in

other states."

John Sackett (R-Huslia) said he was "unsure that the native groups would accept the bill, and the time is running out. The reason that there will be changes in the bill is that there will be a lot of opposition by members of metropolitan areas."

"It's just something that is finally coming out into the open. There is a distinct backlash for aiding people in rural areas," Sackett said. "Not all of the backlash is from the legislators themselves, but it also comes from their constituents."

"The main concern is with the six month clause," Sackett said. "If we can get 40 million acres proposed by the federal government put into a temporary withdrawal within 6 months, we will be in good condition."

"We definitely need state assistance of approximately \$100,000 for technical assistance to help the

Division of Lands in sending people to rural areas to withdraw lands. It will take money that the natives do not have," Sackett said.

Mike Bradner (D-Fairbanks) said, "The main point of contention is coming from urban Republicans on the 5 per cent royalty money.

Everybody must face the fact that the guts of the bill will be shaped by the governor, the chairman of Finance Committee, Attorney General Boyko, and a few other key people."

"The problem is that people are not looking to the

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benefits of the Native Land Claims Bill. Offshore royalties, plus the 5 per cent royalties from other lands will create a corporation which will have a great financial impact on the state

of Alaska, since they will invest their money here."

"This type of corporation is the only one that would not leave the state when the times got rough," Bradner said.

Ted Stevens (R-Anchorage) focused on the unlimited time factor as the main concern over the bill.

"The problem with the present drafting of the bill involves the perpetual granting of royalties. It is hard to justify this as a settlement," Stevens said.

"The Task Force said that the royalty grant would have no impact on current state revenues nor on future revenues from state lands which are economically productive at this time. The royalty looks only to future development of lands, and would in effect give the natives of Alaska a stake in that future."

Don Wright, President of the Cook Inlet Native Association, said that the 50 year and \$50 million limitation is restricting potential development. The pro-rated amount of \$50 million to 80,000 natives works out to be \$600 per person for 50 years. That also figures out to be \$11 per person per year," Wright said.

"It begins to mean something if the federal government also contributes money and land. Then it could have a tremendous impact on the state," he said. "The main value of this bill will be if they pass it during this session of the legislature. If passed, it will have an impact on Congress' Senate Bill 2906."