

State Accused Of Delay On Quitclaim

Any delay in the State of Alaska obtaining title to the land at the Barrow airport is presently being caused by the State, reports Hugh Nicholls, executive director for the Arctic Slope Native Association.

A quitclaim contract on the land was signed last week by ASNA and, at last report, was still in the hands of the State Attorney General's office.

The Bureau of Land Management director for Alaska, Burt Silcock, has given his personal approval to the contract, Nicholls reports. Although the final decision will be made in Washington, the quitclaim will be forwarded there as soon as it is received.

Earlier this week, Gov. Hickel announced that the Arctic Slope Claim might keep the State from obtaining a Federal Aviation Agency allocation of \$1,315,000 to

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improve the airport. The State must have full title to the land to receive the aid.

Hickel said that ASNA had offered to give a quitclaim but questioned whether the Federal Government would accept it. He claimed that apparently the only way for the State to construct the airport was for the Secretary of the Interior to unlock his freeze on land covered by the Native land claims.

Nicholls replied that a valid quitclaim could be granted on this and similar projects. In addition, the Native groups can sign waivers on certain types of activities on the claims.

Since the BLM presently recognises the claims as "protests", a waiver states that the "protest" does not cover these uses of land—such as wood permits.

An attorney representing — Native groups said that the waivers should be checked carefully to be sure that they permitted only what the Native groups wanted them to permit. If carefully worded, they can be useful in settling problems while maintaining the overall land rights of the Native people.

Hickel's statement brings up some worries about a possible "backlash", as previous statements have been made indicating that the Native claims can block development of the State. However, ASNA offered no obstacles to signing the quitclaim agreement.