

NEW LAND BILL IN PROCESS

Bill Said to Contain Some Same Proposals As in Senate Bill 1964

John Borbridge, president of the Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska Central Council, recently made a trip to Washington, D. C. He drew up a report of his findings to the delegates of his organization to the upcoming convention in Juneau on April 25-26-27.

Based on discussions with various Congressmen and high ranking Congressional committee officials it appears, Borbridge reported, that there is, apparently, going to be a new land bill to be reported by the Interior Department and which would be cleared by the Bureau of the Budget.

It would then be referred to Senate and House Committees on Interior and Insular Affairs.

This action is expected to take place today in Washington.

It was also rumored that the

new bill would call for a flat \$200 million for land compensation.

Borbridge said that the new bill will apparently contain some of the same proposals that were in the Interior bill S.1964. He stated:

"It appears, as to the land, that the Department of the Interior will propose, as it did in that reprehensible document, S.1964, that each village will be granted title to not in excess of 50,000 acres.

"Further, individual villages will receive title to surface rights but benefits derived from the minerals will be reserved to the area corporations."

The new bill, Borbridge said, as to the Outer Continental Shelf revenues, will fix a dollar ceiling limitation

(Continued on page 6)

New Land Bill . . .

(Continued from page 1)

as to the amount of the share of OCS revenues that will go to native groups or associations.

"The question is, how much?" asked Borbridge. "It has been described as generous, but from whose viewpoint is uncertain."

The new bill would program the funds received by native groups or corporations with the disposition and expenditures subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, or his authorized representative, the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"Alaska natives will be granted a 50-year use and occupancy license, renewable at the option of the Secretary of the Interior, to federal public lands in Alaska," said Borbridge.

He said this proposal will

refer primarily to hunting and fishing, etc.

John Borbridge pointed out that the provision in the compromise bill S.2906 that seeks 100,000 acres from the National Forest in recognition of the unique situation of native villages that are "surrounded" by National Forest lands, will be deleted.

In his message to the delegates, Borbridge suggested courses of action to counteract the new Interior bill.

"Obviously, we must prepare to seek more than 50,000 acres per village," he stated.

"The Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska brought suit as a language speaking group and their Indian Title to 2.6 million acres of land has survived any taking by the United States.

"By the mere expedient of changing the formula to 50,000 acres per village, the United States will appropriate 2.5 million acres of judicially affirmed Indian Title lands!"

What Borbridge means is that if the Interior Department has its way in the passage of a land bill in Congress based on 50,000 acres per village, all of the native people in Alaska would be awarded only 2.5 million acres of land.

"We should prepare to seek other than those lands that may be granted in the immediate vicinity of the village as an ecological area.

"We are entitled to and should seek lands that can be developed by the area corporations because of their minerals or timber."

He said that data bringing out the probable worth of lands should be compiled.

"We should prepare to substantiate our claims of a right to and need for the monetary settlement and land areas outlined in the provision in S.2906."

Alaska native leaders will be asked to emphasize the need to testify in Washington in a balanced and coordinated manner.

Borbridge told the delegates that they should prepare to meet contentions that native corporations need excessively close supervision; that the proposed compensation figure is adequate;

That 50,000 acres is sufficient acreage and that they should testify as to the competency of the native leadership and the natives' plans for the compensation and lands that they may receive.

In pointing out the important points, Borbridge included the following:

"We must inform the Congress as to the basis for our Alaska Native Land Claims, keeping in mind that Indian claims cases are known to be one of the most complex aspects of law and that the situation within Alaska demands unique knowledge.

"Our task is to educate and to convince members of the United States Congress as to the substance of our native land claims.

"We must accelerate our efforts! General opinion is that these efforts have let up recently!"