

AFN May Find Senate Lobbying Strenuous

WASHINGTON, D.C.—When the representatives from the Alaska Federation of Natives return to Washington next month to begin lobbying the Senate, they can expect nearly as strenuous a task as was required to lobby the House.

Staff members of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee are reportedly working on administrative provisions within an Alaska Native land claims settlement proposal which are substantially different from those recommended by the House Indian Affairs Subcommittee.

Strong emphasis is placed on regional corporations in the House bill. Many Senate Interior Committee members are believed to favor a statewide Native development corporation with wide-ranging powers and substantial federal control in the form of a commission to oversee corporation management, settle disputes, and determine eligibility.

Administration officials hint that they are also unhappy with the lack of central administrative controls in the House bill.

Rumors circulating in some

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congressional offices indicated last week that the Administration, at the time the land claims bill was reported out of the House Indian Affairs Subcommittee on August 3, considered a reassessment of its position which favored a 40 million acre settlement.

An Interior Department attorney stated Friday that the 40 million acre figure mentioned in the Administration bill represented a firm commitment.

Much of the Senate bill will depend on the strength of support offered by Alaska Senators Gravel and Stevens. During Interior Committee hearings in April, both Alaska Senators indicated that they would support a 60 million acre settlement.

Alaska Congressman Nick Begich, credited with breaking the land claims deadlock in the House, worked many days until the early morning hours in an effort to move the legislation.

When the AFN bill was introduced before the Senate, Senator Ted Stevens went on record as a sponsor "by request" of the legislation.

Neither Stevens nor Gravel has been acknowledged as enthusiastic over moving the issue.

Senator Stevens, while responsive to requests from Alaska constituents, has not received a reputation as a friend of a Native.

Senator Gravel, as Anchorage Daily News columnist C. Robert Zelnick recalled in a recent Washington Post story, was the man who said he would be a Senator for Alaska while Senator Gruening was more concerned about Laos and other far off places.

Senator Gravel is now deeply concerned about Laos and other such far off places that his energies have been diverted from Alaska issues as the Native land claims.

These two men have been

among those predicting that the House would be difficult to persuade to act favorably on land claims. It now appears as though the Senate may have difficulty in even matching the provisions of the bill which is likely to come from the difficult House.

Should Senators Gravel and Stevens emulate the effort made by Congressman Begich to any extent, a settlement acceptable to Alaska Natives should soon be forthcoming from the Senate.

The real test will be to see whether two men can persuade a body of 100 as easily as one man can persuade 435.

Maybe, with any luck at all (perhaps even with a little effort), the 104 year wait of Alaska Natives will be over this year.