

OMNIBUS BILL RELATES ANCSA

BLM Pores Over Maps Despite Clouding Issues

By JEFF RICHARDSON

Did you ever wonder what happened to your village land selection application?

Poring over maps and papers, ten men and women at the state headquarters of the Bureau of Land Management in Anchorage have the tedious job of checking and re-checking the applications for accuracy.

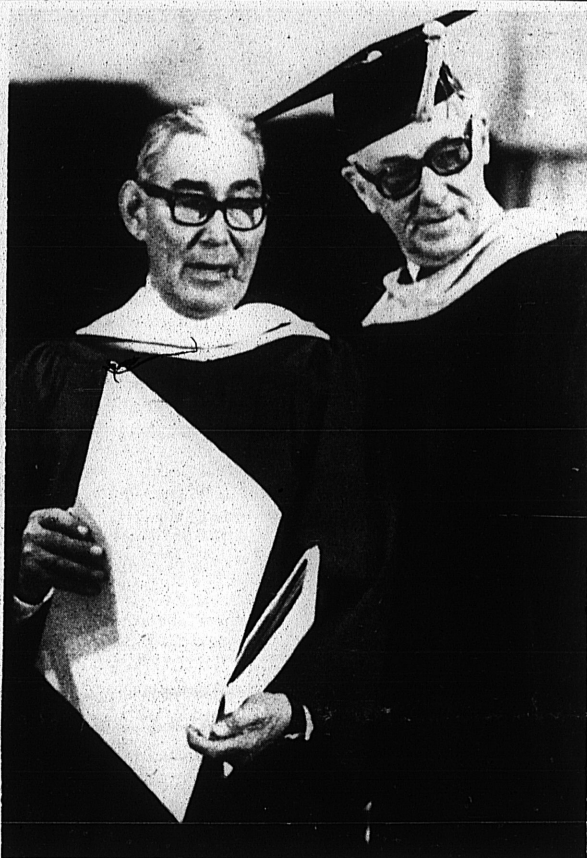
With the general questions of easements and navigable waters still clouding the land selection process, the state BLM office has taken the position that it must proceed as best it can with the information and policy it now has.

Robert Arndorfer, BLM's Chief of Technical Services, said doubts raised by the easement and water issue have not slowed the land conveyances down.

According to Sue Wolf of the Branch of Lands and Minerals Operations, the adjudicators are still waiting for the Solicitor's Office of the Department of Interior to issue a departmental easement policy. In the meantime, BLM continues to use its own easement criteria, which differs from that adopted by the Land Use Planning Commission. The policies of BLM and the Commission have come under fire from Native corporations.

State Director of the BLM, Curtis McVee said he did not think the easement criteria now being used by BLM would differ greatly from the departmental policy. He said Interim Conveyances already issued would have to be reconsidered in light of the new policy but that no easements would be added. Some

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FITTING HONOR — Frank Degnan, former legislator and mayor of his village of Unalakleet and sergeant at arms of the AFN, Inc., was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Public Service degree at the commencement ceremonies at the University of Alaska last week. A man who uses his wit to needle his fellow Native people into doing more for their future, Degnan richly earned his degree. Standing with him is the long time official of UA, Dr. Don Dafeo. — UA Photo

Sen. Ted Stevens' Bill Designed to Settle Remaining Issues

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens Thursday introduced an Omnibus Bill designed to settle remaining issues involving the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, including clarification of the intent of Congress to settle Native trespass claims based on aboriginal title.

The omnibus bill takes in three measures which Stevens had introduced previously and includes several other provisions regarding ANCSA.

One of the incorporated bills would extend the deadline for enrollment under the act so that about 1,000 Native people who are eligible for enrollment but missed the March, 1973 deadline

can still apply for benefits.

It also would direct the Interior Secretary to establish an escrow fund for revenues received by the Department for activities on federal lands later given to Natives. This way Natives would receive these revenues when given final title to their land.

Payments under the claims act could not be considered when determining eligibility of any household for food stamps, under this provision. It would also exempt Native corporations from the Investment Company Act until stock in such corporations could be traded, which will not be until Dec. 31, 1991.

The bill specifies that any distribution of funds already made from the Alaska Native funds or by any Native corporation will not be disturbed.

A provision in the bill would allow the federal government to pay interest on the Alaska Native fund while monies are being held each quarter. The senator said that the money is often

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SEN. TED STEVENS

Seeks to Exempt Alaska from Voting Rights Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, today introduced an amendment to the Voting Rights Act to exempt Alaska from the provision in the

bill requiring written voting information for all language minorities.

Several Native groups in Alaska have oral or written languages

which make printed ballots impossible. The State government has instituted a voter assistance program that includes interpreters for groups that have an unwritten

language.

"Alaska has already taken care of its language minority groups with the voting assistance statute," Gravel said, "and it's working well." The statute also helps Alaskans register to vote and encourages voters to get to the polls on election day.

The Voting Rights Act was passed by the Congress in 1965 to overcome numerous state laws that infringed on individual voting rights. The Senate is now considering a 10-year extension of the act and an increase in its coverage.

The success of the act since 1965 has been significant. English literacy requirements that were discriminatory have been repealed in many states, and voter registration drives have been conducted to increase voter participation.

But, Gravel said, "many abuses still exist that must be dealt with. Continuation of the Voting Rights Act will make that possible."

Last month, during hearings on the bill by the Judiciary Committee, Gravel testified in favor of extending the act and explained the unique language situation in Alaska.

A vote on the bill is expected in late June or July.

Editorial Comment—

Alaska Natives Will Benefit from New School of Journalism

We are pleased to note that the University of Alaska President Robert W. Hiatt has recommended that the university's journalism department be upgraded to a state-wide School of Journalism in the university's recent reorganization.

The recognition is richly deserved by a department that has served Alaska well for 20 years. It has contributed much to journalism and broadcasting in Alaska through high quality education of many young journalists. The department's graduates are working on numerous newspapers, magazines and radio and TV stations in Alaska, as well as in many other positions requiring skill in communications. Its alumni include lawyers, doctors, teachers, business leaders and public officials.

The department's faculty also have contributed much in the way of public service. Prof. Jimmy Bedford helped our own Tundra Times get started and has advised it wisely for ten years. Bedford and Prof. Charles J. Keim have for many years encouraged Alaska's Native writers to write, helping them publish their work. Prof. John Ullmann helped establish The North Sloper, a new newspaper in Barrow.

Recently the department responded in another way to the needs of Alaska's Natives through the Village Correspondent Program. The program, planned and coordinated by Prof. B.G. Olson, involved the entire faculty. It took journalism training to 39 Alaska Natives through seminars in Barrow, Nome and Fairbanks, working closely with the media. The seminars offered 20 hours of concentrated instruction and practice in writing. And, the students have continued to write, sending their work to the journalism department for evaluation and continuing instruction by mail. The Tundra Times was happy to be a part of the program. It is highly successful, and we urge that it be continued next year.

The professors have lectured and advised in high schools, to professional groups, clubs and other organizations throughout the state for years. It is fitting that the university now formally recognize this long-standing state-wide program.

We commend President Hiatt for his vision. It is a positive step toward better educational opportunities for Alaska's Natives.