

SENATE PASSES BILL 76 TO 5

Bill Moves Through Senate with Much Ease

By THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.
Washington Correspondent



CONGRESSMAN Nick Begich holding the official recorded vote of the A.N.L.C.B. which passed the House of Representatives 334 to 63, is surrounded by Don Wright, President of the Alaskan Federation of Natives and other Native Alaskans who were in the House Gallery during the vote. Copies of this historic recorded vote, which was signed by the Speaker of the House of

Representatives Carl Albert, were sent to all community libraries and secondary libraries in the State. The Congressman has also sent copies of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD which contains the entire debate and voting records of Congressmen on this historic legislation to the same libraries.

WASHINGTON, D.C. (November 2, 1971)—The Senate, by a vote of 76 to 5 passed its version of the Alaska Native Land Claims Bill Monday.

The floor debate began at 10 a.m. with supportive arguments for the bill from Senators Jackson, Stevens, Gravel and Kennedy. The roll call vote for final passage came shortly after 3 p.m. Unlike the spirited debate on the House side two weeks ago, little opposition was offered to the bill in the Senate.

The bill which finally emerged is nearly identical to the land claims legislation which was reported out of the Senate Interior Committee in early October. Minor technical amendments, offered by the Alaskan Senators, easily won acceptance by voice vote.

Among the most significant of these was one which would allow natives living in predominantly non-native areas, such as Juneau, Kenai and Sitka, to make land selections from adjacent federal lands.

The ease with which the legislation moved through the Senate was largely due to persuasive private conversations Interior Committee Chairman Henry Jackson (D-Washington) and the Alaskan Senators had with members of the Senate in rooms adjoining the chambers. As the debate progressed it became obvious that the legislation had strong support. The overwhelming favorable vote, as one observer commented, was

just "window dressing."

The only strong debate occurred between Senator Gravel and Senator Cannon, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over the defence petroleum reserves such as Petroleum Reserve Number Four on the North Slope of Alaska.

Senator Cannon argued that the selection rights of the bill should not be offered to natives in Pet. 4.

Senator Gravel, in a heated response, defended the right of Arctic Slope villages to select lands historically used and occupied by them in that reserve.

The Senate action was witnessed by nearly 100 Alaskans and native supporters from the visitors gallery.

The Senate leaders were commended and the native leaders were commended from the floor by several Senators for efforts in bringing the claims issue before Congress.

As the roll for final passage was called, the Senators appeared more excited than the observers. So loud were they during the vote that the presiding officer silenced the Senate

(Continued on Page 6)

Senate Passes Bill...

several times during the vote by pounding his gavel.

Speaking with the native leadership following the vote, Senator Jackson stated that he was confident that the bill would become law prior to the end of the session this year.

The substantial differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill require that representatives of both bodies meet to work out a bill acceptable to both Houses.

Senator Jackson said the bills were "complex" and said the Conference Committee would not meet until his committee had met to "define the differences."

Named as Senate conferees were Senators Allott, Bible, Gravel, Metcalf, Stevens, Jackson and either Senator Fannon or Jordani.

The Senate bill provides a 500 million dollar federal appro-

priation. \$500 million in mineral royalties and an option between two land proposals. Alaskan natives could select 40 million acres of land contiguous to villages in simple fee title or 30 million in fee with 20 million acres available in use permits.

Senator Jackson commented that the bill "opens the door of opportunity to the native people of Alaska."

Senator Stevens stated it would "finally do justice to Alaskan natives."

Senator Gravel said the legislation would not give natives "a chance to get a piece of the action."

The Alaska legislators and native leaders traded compliments late into the night Monday at a victory celebration complete with champagne and caviar.