

Racial Stratification Feared--

Development of This Likely If Settlement Delayed

By THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.
Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The most sensitive issue facing the House-Senate Conference Committee on Alaska Native Land Claims legislation this week has undoubtedly been that of deciding which procedure will be used by natives for land selection.

The Alaska Federation of Natives is firm on two points concerning selection.

First, the Natives state, they should have prior selection rights over the State of Alaska to 40 million acres of land.

Secondly, the AFN says Natives should have free-floating selection rights to 10 million acres of land throughout Alaska.

AFN lobbyists have enumerated to the conferees its arguments against the house de-

layed selection provision.

In a position paper, the AFN itemized the following disadvantages:

— Because of the delayed selection, a final settlement would not come about until 12 years after enactment of the legislation. This delay could intensify racial stratification currently

(Continued on page 4)



SUPERMARKET STOP—Alice Upicksoun, wife of the President of the ASNA makes a quick stop at Shontz's the local Barrow general store. Prices of shipping merchandise north make village markets some of the most expensive in the United States and the living cost in Barrow is astronomical.

Photo by MADELYN SHULMAN



ASNA HEAD—Arctic Slope Native Association President Joseph Upicksoun outlined numerous grounds on which his organization based their petition for first class borough status on the

North Slope. Commissioners (from left) Bob Korn and Gary Ackerman and Asst. Attorney General John Schlanger listen.

Racial Tension Feared..

(Continued from page 1)

re-surfacing in Alaska.

— The North Slope law suit would be unresolved until selections are completed and numerous other law suits may appear.

— Resistance from Native villages to interim state selections (which they will view as an infringement on their rightful claims) would seriously impede the land selection process of the state.

— A social catastrophe, a bitter split between Natives and non-Natives, could result from measures taken by Natives to meet the challenge to their land—a challenge created by the delayed selection.

— The land freeze would continue. In order to protect their delayed selection rights, the Natives would ask the Secretary of the Interior and the Land-Use Planning Commission (to be created upon enactment of the bill) to withdraw large land areas in the state.

— The false sense of incentive and urgency (land rush psychology) would be imparted on the state, resulting in unwise and excessive selections.

— Chances for the state to receive an extension of its land selection period would be seriously jeopardized.

— Native leaders and their constituents would be severely disillusioned by the failure to achieve the minimum adequate settlement. This disillusionment, resulting from the sale of the Natives birthright for an actual 18 million acre settlement, would adversely affect post-settlement Native self sufficiency.

— Substantial deprivation of the right of Natives to select economically valuable land would occur. After selecting less than half of their entitlement, Natives would watch the state select acreage with the greatest economic potential, which would leave the greater portion of their selections to be made from the poorest land in Alaska.

Since the senators and representatives assigned to the conference committee are not commenting publicly on the probable outcome of their deliberations, it is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of the AFN's opposition to the split selection provision.

Rep. Wayne Aspinall (D-Colo.), chairman of the House Interior Committee, is acting as chairman of the conference.

After the painful period his committee, experienced in developing the house bill, he may not be very eager to compromise on the selection issue.

The AFN, in light of the tremendous lobbying successes accomplished by native leaders in bringing the land claims issue before Congress, should not be underestimated.

One option that will always be open, and one received with minimal enthusiasm in Washington, is for the AFN to ask for the legislation to be killed.

AFN President Don Wright reports that President Nixon has agreed to veto the bill if the Natives find it unacceptable. The AFN convention will reconvene to review the bill next month.

There is also the possibility that the conference committee will not present its report to both bodies of Congress this session. This would, in effect, kill the bill.

Congressional sources indicate that, if two of the three members of the Alaska congressional delegation recommended the bill be killed, the request would most likely be honored.

Senator Stevens disagrees. He believes that the AFN does not have the power to kill the bill, and that it would be disadvantageous to do so anyway.

Stevens is confident that the conference committee report will be acceptable.

To put off the claims issue any longer, he says, would be to invite increased opposition to the Native position which would be difficult to overcome.

The Senator, pointing to mail on his desk, said that opposition in Alaska is running overwhelmingly against the AFN.

Other congressional offices report a similar sampling of public opinion. The mail now being received, however, is not a true reflection of public opinion on the issue.

The flyers being distributed by Anchorage businessmen, marked "urgent-emergency," indicate that this recent reaction is rigged.

Regardless of whatever effort is being made to shape opinion in Alaska, there is one major fact which is not quite under-

The hearings are over. Both bodies of Congress have acted. All past arguments, if unresolved previously, will now be decided by the conferees.

For Alaska Natives, the issue will soon become one of implementation. Implementation of post-settlement policies and programs.

The settlement will, in all probability will soon be a reality, but implementation will be the new challenge.



AGENCY HEAD—Byron Mallott, Tlingit director of the Local Affairs Agency traveled with the Local Boundary Commission on a round of hear-

ings across the state last week. In six days the Commission held boundary hearings in more than a half a dozen communities.