

Claims Hearings to Be Held July 8 in U.S. House, Senate

Alaska Federation of Natives President Emil Notti has been notified that land claims hearings on bills HR 17129 and S 3586 will be held next month on July 8 and will be held before the U.S. House and Senate Committees on Interior and Insular Affairs.

The purpose of the hearings will be to receive testimony from representatives of

Alaska's native leaders on pending legislation to settle the century-old native land claims question.

AFN President Notti will lead the delegation at the hearings in Washington.

"We are, of course, pleased that the House and Senate have set aside time for presentation of our material," said Notti. "However, we believe that because of the

press of other business before Congress, it will be nearly an impossibility to obtain legislation during the present session. We must be practical in the matter."

Notti said that many areas covering the whole question remain to be resolved.

"For example," he declared, "all the native organizations in Alaska are

(Continued on page 6)



NATIVE LEADERS—Before February hearings before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs in Anchorage, the native leaders had a pre-meeting to discuss the

hearing. Left to right: Emil Notti, Don Wright, back to camera, John Borbridge, Jerome Trigg, Rep. Willie Hensley, Cecil Barnes and Harry Carter. —Staff Photo

Claims Hearings July 8...

(Continued from page 1)

firm in their belief that 40 million acres is needed to meet our need for an economic base."

The administration bill calls for a maximum of 50,000 acres per village or approximately 9-mile square area of land.

Notti cited the June 12 meeting he, Rep. William (Willie) Hensley, Don Wright and Clifford Groh had with Gov. Walter J. Hickel in which the governor reaffirmed his position that the State of Alaska would support the leaders request for 40 million acres of land.

Notti said it was the native leaders' belief that the State of Alaska was realistic in its offer of assistance, and they were pleased that a united front on the land question will be accomplished.

"Our position that \$500 million in compensation is necessary is not an unreasonable position either," said Notti. "We will hold the line for this amount. We feel that our case for this money award to be just and fair.

He added: "It may sound like a lot of money but when you compare it to awards made by the U.S. Court of Claims to other groups in the Lower 48, it is not unreasonable."

Notti cited examples to back his statement. He pointed out that the Mission Bands in California were recently awarded more than \$29 million for their lands, a total area that represents about one-tenth of the lands traditionally used and occupied by Alaska's native people.

He said that another example was that the Spokane Indians were awarded more than \$6.5 million for a couple of hundred thousand acres.

"Even the Mescalero Apache Tribe in New Mexico was awarded \$8.5 million for lands taken from them OUTSIDE their reservation," Notti pointed out.

He said the Mescalero award figured out to a little more than \$5,000 per capita.

"This award," said Notti, "coupled with loans of nearly \$2 million from the Bureau of Indian Affairs Revolving Fund to put a plush ski resort on the reservation, has given those people a firm base from which to begin the long uphill struggle for economic self-sufficiency we hear so much about."

The AFN president said there haven't been any loans to Alaska natives or native organizations north of Yakutat

for years but that "our Southeastern brethren received assistance and we are glad they were able to do so."

He said, the fact remains that virtually none of the remaining 75 per cent of Alaska's natives have gotten any kind of financial assistance from the Department of the Interior.

The native people, he said, will take an infusion of mass capital to create economic bases where regular capital is afraid to invest to bring about any substantial improvement in the lot of our people.

"We are continually asked what we would do with such a large amount of money," said Notti. "We believe that with sound financial counsel, and there are many in Alaska who can provide such counsel, that any award would be utilized to its fullest extent.

"It is time to get over the old stereotype that native people are irresponsible and have no economic sense.

"Sure we have people who can't handle money—but we notice that the number of bankruptcies going on in the courts today are at an all time high. And there are very few, if any native people, filing those petitions."

"Another major objection we have to the latest Udall bill," Notti continued, "is that they will seek to exercise control over our lives by having the Alaska Native Commission created within the Department of Interior.

"We know what that means. Continued domination by those who neither understand or believe in bringing about truly first class citizenship to Alaska's natives. We shall maintain a firm stand against any effort to create another 'Little BIA' to harass us in the future."

Emil Notti said the native people feel the Commission should be independent and report directly to the President or Congress, and be composed of Alaskans who are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

"We believe the Commission should also have its headquarters in Alaska and be on hand to make daily decisions," Notti stated.

TWO-HOUR HEARING

Notti said he had been informed that the House hearings will be held on July 8.

"Unfortunately, we will have only about two hours to present our case," he said.

"We believe they will be a dramatic two hours. We know this is not sufficient time for our case and the Committee also appreciates the shortness of the schedule.

"However, the important thing to remember is that we will be able to get into the record substantially more than the oral testimony. We are now preparing such testimony on a variety of subjects."

Notti reminded the native people that they should remember that the three-day hearing in February was important and the native position was made known then at great length.

"In addition, we have now been assured of substantial support from the National Congress of American Indians and the Association on American Indian Affairs. These two organizations represent nearly all the 300 Indian tribes, bands and groups in the Lower 48," Notti pointed out.

He said the AFN has been in touch with the leaders of the two organizations and the native position has been explained to them for an equitable and just settlement.

"They have agreed to support us in every way possible," AFN president said. "We feel that IF we are not successful in obtaining legislation and settlement this year, that we will have a great ground swell of public opinion on our side next year, and that we will obtain justice.

"Banded together, with a reasonable attitude and help from our many, many non-native friends we will win."

President Notti said he was as yet not exactly sure who else beside himself, AFN first vice president, Don Wright, two land claims attorneys, Clifford Groh and Barry Jackson, would comprise the delegation to Washington.

He said it was possible that one or two more would accompany the delegation.

The group is scheduled to leave for the nation's capitol on Sunday July 7.

Following the House hearings, the delegation will give testimony before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

Emil Notti concluded:

"We want to express our deep appreciation to Governor Hickel and members of Alaska's congressional delegation who helped in obtaining hearings."