

AFN Warns Passage of Bill Dim Unless Committee Acts Now

Leaders of the Alaska Federation of Natives currently in Washington, D.C. reported today that action on the native land claims bill has been delayed dangerously long and that passage of a bill this session may be dim unless action this week is speedy and effective.

Executive director, Eben Hopson, and first vice president John Borbridge, Jr. said that the above situation was pointed out

at a briefing session Monday with AFN attorney Ramsey Clark.

Meanwhile, in Anchorage, a group of about 175 concerned citizens have formed a united front to push for passage of a bill during this session because

they fear Alaska's economy will be strangled without settlement of the issue.

The group's formation followed a speech by Edward Patton, president of the newly formed pipeline company, Alyeska, in which he warned that passage of the land claims bill is essential to getting the pipeline project underway.

The united movement comprised mostly of Anchorage businessmen, is encouraging all Alaskans to wire or call friends in the lower 48 with a request that they contact their congressional representatives in Washington and urge passage of the Native land claims bill.

Contrary to charges that there has been no prior leadership in an effort to bring about passage, Borbridge said today that he would like to emphasize that the natives have been unified in seeking legislation and have done everything possible to reconcile diverse viewpoints among themselves.

"And, I think it is extremely important that all Alaskans clear-

natives have been playing in seeking a resolution and that they support and get behind the native leadership which through long, consistent efforts, is primarily responsible for the progress that has been made to

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date."

The Senate has already passed a bill and the issue is presently in a subcommittee of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. This subcommittee is scheduled to discuss the matter Sept. 17, 18, 21, and 22 in executive session before reporting a bill out.

A leadership delegation arrived of about eight AFN people in Washington this week to meet with members of the House Interior committee before the committee begins its crucial sessions Sept. 17.

Hopefully, Hopson reported, the four days of sessions will result in the full committee reporting a bill in time for action by the House at an early date this fall.

Since arriving in Washington, the Federation delegation has been active in attempting to impress upon members of the committee the urgent need for a bill during this session of Congress and the importance of adding additional land to the 10 million acres provided by the senate bill.

"We are doing all we can to come out with a bill," Borbridge said at a briefing session Monday morning. Federation Attorney Ramsey Clark cautioned the delegation that the House committee is more fiscally conservative than the Senate committee and may wish to reduce the \$500 million cash compensation provided by the Senate bill as the price for additional land selection rights.

The delegation has in its meeting with congressmen stressed the importance of the natives' demands for 40 million acres of land and has stuck by its original request for 40 million acres, \$500 million in cash, and \$500 million in royalties.

Members have encountered a polite and attentive reception to their arguments, Hopson said, but a reluctance on the part of some representatives to commit themselves in advance of the committee's session.