

Young Takes AFN, Inc. to Task For no Invite to Claims Rewrite

FAIRBANKS — U.S. Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, has taken the Alaska Federation of Natives Inc. to task for failure to invite him to Interior Department sessions to re-write land selections.

Young told the Tundra Times Friday that he intended to sit in on the final drafting of land selection regulations under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, "because I have invited myself.

"It bothers me when AFN does not officially request that I be there. I think they are making a grave error because they don't have the horsepower with the Department (of In-

terior)," Young said.

"I think they would be very wise to solicit my support. I am doing it because I believe in it but it would be much nicer if they came and asked me. This is just common courtesy," he said.

The Interior Department last week agreed to involve Alaska Natives in the final drafting of land selection regulations, after officials of AFN Inc. told the Interior Department bluntly that the second group of proposed rules and regulations were frankly unacceptable.

State Sen. Willie Hensley, D-Kotzebue and president of AFN

(Continued on page 6)

Takes AFN, Inc. to Task

(Continued from page 1)

Inc., said Interior officials wanted five representatives of the Native people in Washington D.C. when the final regulations are written, but that each region would like to be represented at that session. Hensley said the Interior Department had agreed also to have final regulations put together by May 15th, the date AFN Inc. requested.

Young, a former State Senator from Ft. Yukon, said the "tide is not with us any more," for the land claims in Congress.

"We did something as a people, as a state, that has never been done before . . . and the tide is not with us any more," he said.

"The leaders (of the land claims movement) can't continue to think they are going to get priority attention from Congress as a whole. What they have to do, with the help of Congress, is see that the title is carried forth correctly, but to say the Alaska land claims is a prime issue; it is not. It is a forgotten thing," Young said.

The freshman Congressman said he felt things would go better with the land claims, once the people in the villages "realize they have a say. Right now the people in the villages don't realize this. The organization is being led by leaders in the urban areas.

"As soon as the people in the villages realize they have something to say and as soon as the leaders in the urban areas realize this, the sooner we will find out where the monies are being spent and whether we need to spend them on certain legal fees or whether there are ways to get things done in more reasonable fashion. The whole bit," he said.

"Otherwise," Young continued, "they will erode the land claims. It's just one of those things that will happen and this isn't right, because the people in the villages; it's their money and their land."

Young said he is working hard on getting funding for survey work needed to complete settlement of the land claims.

"You know, the land claims isn't settled until the survey work is done. The title to the 40 million acres is in limbo until the survey work is done and we are just dragging our feet," Young said.

"The time schedule and monies for survey of the lands should have been included in the claims act," he said.

A survey report issued early in February by the Bureau of Land Management indicated it could be the 22nd century before Alaska is completely surveyed. The survey is prerequisite to issuance of titles to the

land, so neither the state, Native population or others are likely to find such a proposal satisfactory.

Lyle Jones, chief of the Division of Technical Services of the BLM, said he wanted to speed up that survey schedule, but he couldn't say for sure where funding or staff would come from. So far, less than 25 million of Alaska's 375,296,000 acres are surveyed.

Young had little comment on the U.S. District Court decision in the case of *Edwardsen vs. Morton* other than to say "the court just decided they didn't have a case. We have laws to follow. When the court decides against us, we can either appeal or agree with the court."

U.S. District Court Judge Oliver Gasch dismissed Thursday (April 19) the claims of the Arctic Slope Native Association that the federal government acted improperly in granting land in the Prudhoe Bay area to the State of Alaska prior to the signing of the land claims act.

But Gasch held that Arctic Slope Eskimos did have grounds to bring suit for illegal trespass onto the North Slope.