

PIPELINE MOVES CLOSER

Local People Shielded

As Senate Says "Go"

Without Further Delay

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The U.S. Senate Tuesday passed and sent to the House legislation removing the right-of-way barriers for construction of the trans-Alaska pipeline.

Passage came on a vote of 77-21 amidst growing pressure on what many call a severe energy crisis and concern over the nation's balance of payments deficit.

Passage of the major pipeline bill, by U.S. Senator Henry Jackson, D-Wash., came shortly after passage of an amendment by Alaska Senators Mike Gravel and Ted Stevens, calling for no further delay of the pipeline for environmental studies.

The vote on the Gravel-Stevens amendment was 49-48.

"It was a very tight vote," said Alaska State Sen. Willie Hensley, D-Kotzebue and president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. "It took the vote of Vice President Agnew to beat the tabling motion (for reconsideration) and pass the amendment. So, it was a very, very tight vote. I don't think that they have had a vote like that in a long time."

Indeed, it was the first time in four years that Agnew has voted in the Senate.

The legislation goes now to the House, where they were attempting Tuesday to get their right-of-way bill out of the subcommittee on public land use.

Hensley, executive director Sam Kito of Doyon Ltd. and Sealaska Corporation President John Borbridge have been in Washington, D.C. more than a week, lobbying for passage of the pipeline legislation.

Of great significance to Alaska Native peoples is the amendment to the Jackson bill by U.S. Sen. James Buckley, Conservative from New York. His amendment, passed late last week by the Senate, would assure the 12 regional Native corporations additional income amounting to millions of dollars if oil is not flowing from the North Slope by 1976.

"Buckley is trying to assure the valuation of our return doesn't decrease, due to the delay," explained Doyon President John Sackett. Sackett conferred on the matter with Kito by telephone to Washington.

"If no oil flows by 1976, the advance of \$15 million this year will automatically become a grant, to be in addition to the present amount," Sackett said.

The Alaska Native delegation meanwhile is hard at work in the House pushing for subsistence protection and indemnification, along with a House version of the Buckley amendment.

Actually, Hensley noted, "the Buckley amendment simply would offset some of the losses we would be having, simply because we did not have the production and the funds coming."

Also of great significance to Alaska Eskimo, Aleuts and Indians is the indemnification amendment (included within the Gravel amendment), which Hensley, Kito and Borbridge are now pushing in the House.

The indemnification amendment, essentially would provide that any permit for a right-of-way for the North Slope include a stipulation making the holder of the right-of-way liable to any Native, or other people, living on subsistence along the right-of-way area. "In other words, if there is some major disaster of some sort, such as a spill, or loss

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of livelihood due to activity along the pipeline right-of-way the people would be compensated and would be recovered for damages," Hensley said.

"The (indemnification) amendment has a very lengthy history," Hensley noted. "We have been trying to get such a stipulation in the permit from the Secretary of the Interior for about a year and a half or more.

"Initially, he recognized our situation as being unique and sent a letter to AFN to that affect and later on he wrote a letter stating that he was not going to provide for such a stipulation and that there was sufficient protection for us. Of course, we disagreed."

"And even while we have been here, he had Senator Jackson request a statement from the Secretary on whether he would provide for such a stipulation in as much as the Senate committee report had some very strong language directing the Secretary to provide for such a stipulation and in fact they referred to our language, that we had drafted.

"Even then, the Secretary refused. And so, of necessity, we had to go on the Senate floor to get the amendment and the kind of stipulation that we wanted. We've spent a lot of time and money trying to gain some protection for those that live along the right-of-way," Hensley said.