

HOPSON CHALLENGES VOTE ON NATIVE HOUSING PLANS

Minority Report Sees State Control At Anchorage Meet

Governor Walter J. Hickel yesterday was accused of attempting to control the May 25-26 Anchorage meeting on native housing.

"Nothing the administration didn't want could have passed," Eben Hopson of Barrow charged in a minority report. Official minutes of the meeting have not yet been released.

Hopson referred to the hastily appointed Native

Housing Task Force, heavily weighted with Republicans, who met with an equal number of state officials to draw up guidelines for use of \$1,000,000 to build native housing.

The funds were slashed from a U.S. House of Representatives bill several weeks ago because the state failed to submit an appropriate plan in time. If the state submits guidelines by July 10th, U.S. Senator E.L. (Bob) Bartlett will attempt to retrieve the funds in the U.S. Senate version of the bill.

Named to the task force were Mrs. Laura Bergt, Ray Christiansen, Andy Demosky, Flore Lekand, Emil Notti, State Rep. John Sackett, Richard Stitt, State Rep. Jules Wright, Mrs. Lula Young and Hopson.

Unlike the Native Task Force, the state people had an opportunity to brief themselves the day before, Hopson complained. "We don't know what they talked about, but they kept referring to 'the meeting yesterday,'" Hopson

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reported.

Because of short notice, four members of the native group were unable to stay through the end of the meeting and missed the voting. Much time was devoted to trying to understand the bill itself. Hopson felt that the final votes were made without fair native representation.

"The guidelines set up at the meeting do not coincide with the housing need," Hopson stated. He charged that they were arrived at with pressure from the "administration's whipping hand."

Specifically, Hopson called for reconsideration of the requirement that a viable economic base in a village be a prerequisite to qualify and participate in the state housing program. He said that such economic prerequisites lose sight of the actual housing conditions that led to the law in the first place. Many villages and individuals who need housing most would lose out, he said.

He also objected to maintaining a flexible ratio of grant money (up to 75%) to loan money (up to 25%). The ratio would be fixed by the state agency administering the program, based on village needs.

Native representatives urged fixing the ratio at maximum grant, minimum loan, while most state representatives favored flexibility, according to Hopson. "The first million dollars will go to those who need it most," he argued. "After five years of operation at break neck speed of construction, we might be able to change the ratio to another fixed rate as the very needy are taken care of."

Mrs. Laura Bergt wrote nine days ago, asking Governor Hickel to schedule a separate one-day meeting with a few knowledgeable officials for members of the Task Force to clarify their thinking.

She has not yet received a reply.

Task force members have not yet received minutes from the meeting, nor have their official duties been outlined.

Still to be decided is the specific state agency that will administer the housing funds.