

Interior secretary fights for sales of stock

by **A.J. McClanahan**

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Interior Secretary Donald Hodel Friday expressed optimism that the department will be able to iron out its differences with the Alaska Federation of Natives over proposed amendments to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

But he held out little hope Interior would change its stand on a sticking

point in the negotiations — whether Native regional corporation stock could be sold to non-Natives after 1991.

"We don't feel it's fair or right to take away their right to sell the stock," Hodel said at a press conference in Anchorage.

AFN is proposing a package of amendments to the settlement act that would allow restrictions on stock sales — currently in place until 1991 — to

remain in place indefinitely. The amendments passed the House recently and are now under consideration in the Senate.

Rather than allowing stock sale restrictions to remain in place, however, Interior has suggested voluntary stock trusts. Under a stock trust plan, stock would be held in trust for a period of years, during which it

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Hodel: Not allowing stock sales 'unconscionable'

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could not be sold without a majority vote of the shares in trust.

Participation in the trust would allow shareholders to decide what rights accompanying the stock go into the trust. Rights such as the ability to bring derivative suits and the right to inspection of corporate records also could be preserved.

AFN spokesmen have said they believe there are too many technical problems associated with stock trusts in order for them to work.

Hodel conceded that Interior has agreed to the concept of continuing the restriction on stock sales for village corporations, but still maintains its opposition to the idea for regional corporation stock.

He explained Friday that Interior will not push for sale of village stock because village lands generally do not include the subsurface estate.

Hodel said it would be "unconscionable" not to allow Natives to sell regional corporation stock. And he said if Congress passed such a bill over his objections, he would recommend that President Reagan veto it.

Native leaders met with Hodel Friday and said their meeting was "pleasant." But they said no agreements were reached on the 1991 legislation. Negotiations will continue, they said.

In other matters, Hodel said Interior is now reviewing its position on oil development in light of the recent drop in oil prices. But he said his concern about reduced domestic production is growing.

"We're in very grave danger of finding ourselves back in the grasp of OPEC," he said.



Nelson N. Angapak, Calista Corp. president, left, and John Colberg, chairman of the Cook Inlet Region Inc. board, center, chat with Interior Secretary Donal Hodel before Native leaders met with Hodel on Friday. photo by Norris Klesman