

# NORTH SLOPE LEASES HELD

The Arctic Slope Native Association received word late yesterday that the Department of Interior will hold the North Slope oil and gas lease drawing, but that they will not issue any leases resulting from the drawing.

In a telegram from William Ryler, director of the American Association of Indian Affairs, the ASNA also learned that the Interior Department has discontinued any further lease drawings "until land claim legislation is in Congress."

Robert Krumm, district manager of the Bureau of

Land Management in Fairbanks, said today that he has seen "nothing in writing yet" concerning the withholding of leases.

"We have received word that we are to suspend any final action on resources or land disposal cases," Krumm said. "The decision in regards to the oil and gas lease drawing will probably mean that we will go ahead with the drawing but will not guarantee when the leases will be issued."

Krumm said the directive concerning resources and land disposal cases is "basically the position we

were in before. It is not a real big change but before in oil and gas lease drawings the leases were issued immediately."

The manager said over 400 persons have filed bids with the BLM for the seventh oil and gas lease drawing.

Today is the closing day for filing bids.

Over four million acres were opened for leasing this time by the BLM and geologists said interest was running high on this offering.

Secretary of Interior Stewart Udall was asked to postpone the drawing for six

months on Oct. 28, following a meeting of the Statewide Native Organization.

The request was made by U.S. Sen. Ernest Gruening on behalf of the organization.

The telegram to Udall said the request for postponement was being made "to allow time to develop an equitable method for the protection of the Eskimos of that area."

The Arctic Slope Native Association has a blanket land claim covering the entire Arctic North Slope area and recently filed a petition

for a court injunction to stop oil and gas lease sales in the Arctic and "freezing" in escrow revenues from past lease sales."

The court action was withdrawn shortly before the Statewide Native Organization meeting in Anchorage "so as not to prejudice the land claim hearings" underway at that time.

At the time the court action was withdrawn, Hugh Nicholls, executive director of ASNA said that if the drawing was not postponed, his group would take the matter to the courts again.