

Gruening Calls For Conference On Land Bills

Sen. Ernest Gruening in his letter to Sen. Henry M. Jackson, chairman of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, on May 8 recommended that a conference on native land situation be held.

The conferees would be native leaders, representatives of the state government, members of the Senate and House Interior Committees and representatives of the Secretary of the Interior.

Sen. Gruening said the

(Continued on page 6)

Conference . . .

(Continued from page 1)

conference would explore ways "to see whether we cannot get agreement on a draft that will be reasonably acceptable to all."

The idea was prompted by Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall's recent reversal of his idea that a three-way compromise land bill be drafted.

This was done by Gov. Walter J. Hickel's Native Land Claims Task Force, the State and the Interior Department and the result was the Senate bill S. 2906.

The bill was introduced by request by Sen. Gruening.

Now the Interior Department has drafted a bill which was to have been introduced by Sen. Henry Jackson on April 30 and which contains great many of the proposals of S. B64, the original Interior bill and which was labeled by the native people as "completely unacceptable."

In calling for the conference, Sen. Gruening said:

"In view of Secretary Udall's amazing reversal, I am not too optimistic, but it's worth trying, since no more important issue confronts the people of Alaska today."

Gruening said that his own view would be to endorse S. 2906, with certain technical amendments, "but it is now clear that with the opposition of the Interior Department it would not be possible to get it enacted, and that even if we could get it enacted, the Department would recommend a veto."