

AFN Asking 11 Million Acres of Land

The Alaska Federation of Natives has decided to push for 11 million acres of land—3.5 million more than has been provided for in the Senate Interior Committee's land claims bill.

Acting upon a directive from the board of directors, seven delegates of the organization made the decision after a week of meetings in Washington D.C. with their regional and national attorneys.

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At an April 20 meeting, the board voted to ask for more than the 7.5 million acres provided for in the unofficial land claims bill.

The body seemed pleased with the bill's \$500 cash compensation and the \$500 million derived from oil and gas royalties, but openly expressed disappointment that the land settlement was so much less than the 40 million acres it had requested.

According to Eben Hopson, executive director of the AFN, the delegates have presented their recommendations to the Senate Interior Committee in the form of a position paper for consideration before the bill is actually reported out.

Indications were, Hopson said, that the bill would officially come out Wednesday, but the time might be moved back a day or two due to the AFN's recommendations.

Concerning the land suggestion, the AFN has requested 7 million acres for village land, 2 million for timber selection, one million for mineral lands, half of which may be selected north of the Brooks Range, and one million acres for hardship land.

The "hardship" provision would be used if the 7 million acres is not enough to go around, Hopson explained.

Other recommendations are:

—Village land grants. The organization has requested that each village receive one township for every 400 persons living in the village. As the unofficial bill now reads, all villages having a population of 400 or more are entitled to select up to two townships.

A village of 2,000 under the bill would receive only 2 townships, but under the AFN proposal would receive 5 townships.

—Termination of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Public Health Service. The AFN proposal requests that a study be made as to whether Alaska is ready to live without these two agencies.

The bill now sets up the procedure for the elimination of the BIA and the PHS within five to 13 years. Talking from his Anchorage office, Hopson explained that the AFN would like for such termination to remain an open question for the period of five years.

The present budget of the BIA and the PHS in Alaska is now about \$70 million, he stressed. Several members of the AFN have said that if the two agencies are to be terminated and many of their functions assumed

by a native service corporation set up under the land claims bill, then the cash settlement for setting up the corporation ought to be increased. Otherwise, while the government puts money in one pocket, it would be taking from the other, natives have charged.

—Subsistence provision.

The AFN has requested that the status quo for hunting remain in effect until the subsistence-use provision of the bill is set in motion so as not to hinder the hunting of native people.

The bill provides that certain lands classified as subsistence use units around villages may, in emergency situations, be closed to non-resident hunting and fishing if necessary to conserve fish and game resources in that area.

Corporation dividends—The AFN has requested, Hopson said, that a provision requiring the corporations set up under the bill to pay dividends be deleted. It is better to leave the money in one or both corporations, he said.

He explained that under the bill the corporations would be required to make \$10 million worth of dividend payments over a period of years.