

# HICKEL ASKED TO KEEP FREEZE

## Commitment Sought Before Endorsement

A four-member team representing the Alaska Federation of Natives plan to ask Interior Secretary-designee Walter J. Hickel to retain the "land freeze" imposed by outgoing Secretary of Interior Stewart L. Udall, in exchange for endorsing Hickel for the Interior cabinet post.

That was the word yesterday by Emil Notti, president of the AFN, in a telephone interview from Washington with Tundra Times.

Notti said if he and three other AFN representatives could not get Hickel to agree to retain the land freeze that they would attempt to get from him an acceptable alternative for protection of native land should the freeze be lifted.

"The only public statement he has made on the subject indicates he might lift the freeze," said Notti. "If he intends to do that, we'd like to know how he intends to protect native land particularly around villages."

Notti said the team, comprised of John Borbridge, vice president of the AFN, Eben Hopson, executive director of the Arctic Slope Native Association, and Barry Jackson, counsel for the group, had not yet been able to obtain an appointment with Hickel.

"It may be two or three days before we can meet with him," Notti said. "We understand he is going to New York tomorrow."

The team had separate conferences today with members of the Alaska congressional delegation, Senators Mike Gravel and Ted Stevens and Congressman Howard Pollock and had a conference with outgoing Secretary

(Continued on page 6)



# Commitment Sought

(Continued from page 1)

Udall.

Udall reiterated what he termed his "last news conference," that the land freeze should be retained and that it was in the best interest of Alaska and its native people.

Udall said the land freeze would do much to expedite an early settlement of the native land claims issue which has gone so long unresolved.

The leadership of the Alaska Federation of Natives is in Washington today seeking definite commitment from the Secretary of the Interior designate Walter J. Hickel as to his position on the current Alaskan land freeze imposed by the outgoing Secretary Stewart L. Udall.

The AFN, a statewide native organization representing some 54,000 Eskimos, Indians, and Aleuts, is being represented by the AFN President Emil Notti; John Borbridge, first vice president of the organization and president of the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indians; State Rep. Willie Hensley of Kotzebue; Eben Hopson, executive director of the Arctic Slope Native Association and former legislator; and Barry Jackson of Fairbanks, counsel for the group.

The delegation is seeking clarification as to whether Hickel intends to continue the land freeze, lift it, or offer an alternative land proposal plan for solution acceptable to Alaska's native people.

The action stemmed from a special meeting of the AFN board of directors called last Tuesday to discuss whether to agree to Hickel's request that the organization give a blanket endorsement to his confirmation as Secretary of the Interior.

The decision of the native leadership to make the Washington trip at this time is being seen as an important move by the native people and the outcome of the talks and final decision of the AFN regarding Walter Hickel will carry important weight on the confirmation proceedings.

The move has strong political overtones stemming from the fact that Hickel has asked the AFN for endorsement and the organization's part may carry important notice next Wednesday when the secretary designate appears before the Interior committee for confirmation.

The move is also being seen as an important prop for the AFN leadership as a bargaining point.

Walter Hickel has expressed some strong indications that he can "undo" what Secretary Stewart Udall has done. The land freeze imposed by Udall is a strong case in point.

The native leadership thinks that Hickel might "undo" the freeze which they think gives the native people a strong political "in" when Congress begins the long-awaited deliberations on the native land problem in Alaska.

In the meantime, the Association of Village Council Presidents representing 10,000 Eskimos and Indians in the lower Kuskokwim and Yukon areas, has issued a formal endorsement of the appointment of Gov. Walter Hickel as Secretary of the Interior.

The association has urged all U.S. Senators to support and confirm Hickel for secretary.

Moses Paukan, president of the AVCP, stated that a man of Hickel's caliber and knowledge of Alaskan problems is indispensable to the welfare of the state in solving many problems.

"The Nixon administration could not have done Alaska a bigger favor," said Paukan, "than to appoint an Alaskan as Secretary of the Interior. Alaska has always suffered from misunderstanding, misshapen policies and federal bureaucratic nonsense, primarily through agencies of the Department of the Interior."

On the other hand, the Kuskokwim Valley Native Association has pulled its earlier intention to endorse Hickel. The final decision of the group will probably depend on the outcome of the AFN conference with Hickel in Washington.

The attitude of the Arctic Slope Native Association was not known at the time of this writing but the Arctic area people are known to have some strong feelings negative to Hickel.

The general feeling among the native leaders seems to be toward endorsing Hickel for confirmation.

They felt that if they didn't, their "hands would be bitten anyway" because of their strong feeling that the oil industry would be the big winner in the process as far as oil discovery in Alaska is concerned.

The native people feel also that their lands were being taken all the time because of land selections by the state in areas they used for food getting and areas they have occupied traditionally.

Some tempers have developed over these occurrences. The out-

---

come of the talks between Hickel and the AFN leadership in Washington can either fan these feelings or allay them.