

Interview with Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska

Sen. Ted Stevens, recently in Fairbanks, reported to the Tundra Times, progress on the Conference Committee on the Interior Appropriation Bill.

Sen. Stevens announced several important additions to the bill. About \$30,000 has been added for health communication radios in fifty villages. The villages will be selected on the basis of need. Money was also made available for new health clinics.

\$100,000 was set aside for

the Native Health Clinic portion of the Fairbanks Community Hospital.

Following a recommendation by Howard Rock, Tundra Times editor, and with the backing of the Department of the Interior's Arts and Crafts Board, to which Rock is a member, \$25,000 will be utilized for a feasibility study for an Institute of Alaskan Native Arts.

Senator Stevens said that the setting for the institute has been recommended and that it should be at the University of Alaska.

Funds have been earmarked for alcoholism programs aimed at the nation's Indian population and also for contract dental care.

Over a million dollars will

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help expand the present Boarding Home program, adding new dormitory facilities and counselors.

Through the Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, a bilingual program will be developed at the community college level.

Senator Stevens mentioned another bill now pending which will have a direct impact on Alaska, the Ocean Dumping Bill. This bill seeks to regulate the dumping of refuse in coastal waters.

Stevens is hoping to add an amendment that would allow the return of organic fish waste as a natural part of the food chain.

If the exception is allowed, it would greatly benefit the Alaska fishing and canning industries.

Commenting on the first payments on the land claims settlement in Anchorage on July 1, Stevens explained that an additional million would be made available for those regional corporations who needed more than the initial \$500,000 for their first fiscal year.

Future appropriations will be based upon the budgets submitted by the new corporations

for subsequent years. Each year Congress has to appropriate the money for the current operations.

Stevens remarked on the fact that two of the corporations had not requested the full \$500,000. After budget projections, one asked for and received only \$300,000, another \$384,000.

Originally no monies were to be made available until after the roll was completed. In describing the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement as "unique", Sen. Stevens said, "I think it is probably the most generous settlement the world has seen."

It was significant, he added, that "the money was there as Congress said it would be."

He confirmed his belief that Alaska's representatives in Washington, D.C., need to stay in close contact with what's happening in the state. At times, he explained, this necessitates being absent from Congress.

"There's nothing magic about a 100% voting record," he said. "I've been in Alaska 10 out of 11 weekends in a row and I still have a 87% voting record."