

NO AFN STAND YET ON SPLIT

Board Instead Plots For Land Claims Effort When Cong. Reconvenes

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Staff Writer

In the wake of a withdrawal of the Arctic Slope Native Association from the Alaska Federation of Natives, the board of directors of the AFN met Monday to plot a land claims effort in Washington, D.C. when Congress reconvenes during the middle of November.

The board took no stand on the ASNA break, according to AFN executive director Eben Hopson. He added that he preferred to leave any further comments on the matter up to Don Wright, president of the AFN. However, Wright could not be reached before press time.

As past executive director of ASNA, Hopson was somewhat caught in the middle of the controversial situation.

He explained from his office in Anchorage that the board decided to maintain at least two board members and a staff member continuously in Washington until Congress adjourns. If it appears that a bill might come out of the House, additional board members might be sent to the Capitol, he added.

Prior to the recess of Congress in October, indications were that staff members of the House would work on a land claims bill so that an outline would be ready for the committee when it comes back, Hopson continued. And, the board is aware of no changes along this line.

The land claims matter now rests in the House Interior subcommittee on Indian Affairs following passage of a land claims bill in the Senate.

Wright will leave the first weekend in November for Washington, Hopson said, adding that he himself will leave sometime during the following week.

Board members, Willie Hensley and Byron Mallott, will be on the scene for parts of November.

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ber and December. Congress is expected to reconvene Nov. 16, he added, but some of the committee members will probably begin arriving several days before.

It is uncertain just what effect the withdrawal of the Arctic Slope Native Association will have on AFN efforts in Washington.

The association, which represents about 4,000 Eskimos north of the Brooks Range, announced Tuesday, Oct. 20 that it was pulling out of the AFN because it disagreed with the philosophy underlying the AFN land claims position.

Charlie Edwardson, Jr., executive director of ASNA, made the initial announcement in Anchorage at the annual convention of the National Congress of American Indians.

He charged that the AFN "has undercompromised and has undersold us and we have to protect the corpus of our title.

Both he and Joe Upicksoun, president of ASNA, made it clear that the Arctic Slope natives are still retaining the AFN goal of 40 million acres, \$500 million and a 2 per cent overriding royalty in mineral revenues. However, the ASNA proposal calls for distribution of land to villages on the basis of native claims, not on the basis of population, as has the AFN.

The split was probably no big surprise to many members of the AFN. ASNA, which claims the entire 56.5 million acres on the Arctic Slope, has in the past clearly stated to board members that it opposes a land settlement which does not take into account the special subsistence needs or the rich oil lands of the Slope.

An Eskimo family of five reportedly needs at least 1,500 acres to subsist off the land.

When asked why the group chose to break away now, Edwardson replied that it feared the partial freeze proposed by Interior Secretary Walter Hickel will not protect the land claims of the Arctic Slope Natives.

Hickel's proposal would freeze eight townships around each village but would allow for the processing of state applications for land. These applications will be honored, he said last week in Anchorage, if they don't infringe on basic native rights.

However, Upicksoun said, "we have instructed our attorneys to prepare for and initiate any course of action that may be

required to protect our interests, including a lawsuit to revoke the tentative approval of land selections by the State of Alaska in the Prudhoe Bay area thereby nullifying the September 1969 lease sale.

"We continue to be dedicated to a fair, just and honorable settlement and will work to that end", Edwardson said.

But, he added, "the AFN has lost sight of the fundamental principles upon which the entire settlement is premised. That is, this is a land claims settlement, not a federal welfare program or another piece of anti-poverty legislation."

Neither the AFN bill nor the Senate passed bill, he said, "provide for a fair exchange between what is being taken from us and what we receive in exchange."

Upicksoun offered a brief explanation of the Arctic Slope bill, which, he said, has been submitted in outline form to Congressman James Haley, chairman of the House Indian Affairs Subcommittee and to every member of the committee.

The ASNA proposal would divide the State into seven regions based on similar geographic and ethnic characteristics. A regional corporation would be established to administer the settlement proceeds and to receive title to the land located within the various regions.

Each regional corporation would receive a proportionate share of 40 million acres of land based on each region's land claim area.

Following is the name of the region, the percentage of the 380 million acres in the State the region claims, and the share of the 40 million acres it would receive based on that percentage.

The region would also receive its share of the \$500 million and the 2 per cent royalty on the same proportionate basis, according to the ASNA proposal.

Arctic Slope—15 per cent, 6 million acres; Northwest—10 per cent, 4 million acres; Southwest—15 per cent, 6 million acres; Central—30 per cent, 12 million acres; Aleutian—5 per cent, 2 million acres; Southern Coast—15 per cent, 6 million acres; Southeast—10 per cent, 4 million acres.

Under the recently passed Senate bill the villages of the Arctic Slope would each receive only about 23,000 acres for every 400 people (as would all villages). ASNA has estimated

that on this basis it would receive only 138,000 plus the additional 500,000 granted solely to it under the bill.