

State Land Bill Running Into Trouble in Finance Committee

The State Native land claims bill, HB672, is beginning to run into difficulties as it reaches the House Finance Committee and its

chairman Rep. Harold Strandberg, R-Anchorage.

The bill, however, has gained support from the House Majority Leader, Rep. Ted

Stevens, R-Anchorage, who has agreed to carry the maneuvers of the bill on the House floor.

In two hearings, Strandberg has pointed out what he considered weak points in the measure.

He is reported to have said that the bill might not be recognizable when it gets out of his committee. He said it was not only the matter of points but that there was also about 20 amendments offered by people who helped to draft the bill.

The main concern has been the 5 per cent royalty con-

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ceived by the Land Task Force in the original version of the bill that would be given the native people from the state selected lands and submerged lands not yet selected.

In Gov. Walter J. Hickel's version of the bill he sent down to the House, the 5 per cent would be on federal leaseholdings and submerged lands excluding the 18 million acres the state has already selected.

In his testimony, Atty. Gen. Edgar Boyko said the royalties would include Cook Inlet and Swanson River oil fields. Strandberg is said to be unhappy about this and the representatives have not appeared to like it either. They indicated that although it looked generous on the part of the governor, they have preference for future development of native areas.

The bill, as it stands now, any state royalty hinges on the lifting of the land freeze by Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall in six months. Some testimony indicated that this would be used as a persuader to force the lifting of the freeze by Udall.

Barry Jackson, attorney for Fairbanks Native Association, does not agree that it would work this way and wants to amend the bill to grant a time extension by request of the governor if he sees fit.

This has worried Ted Stevens also but he said this week he would go along with Jackson's amendment.

Don Wright, president of the Cook Inlet Native Association who has gone to Washington and had talks with Secretary Udall and Vice President Hubert Humphrey and other government officials, that the federal policy now is heading toward letting the native people take the lead by being active and dealing directly with the state.

Wright said that if the state and the native people can come to an agreement, Udall would lift the freeze because there would no longer be any disagreement.

Another amendment that is being offered also is to provide technical assistance to the native people in selection of lands. Udall is said to feel that this will be necessary.

Barry estimated that if this is done, the cost of the program would be around \$100,000.

Other serious points of discussion on the bill are taxation of native lands and the possible cutoff date for the royalty.

Rep. Strandberg had said earlier that the bill would come out of his committee this week but now he doesn't say when it will come out.

He is now saying that the work on the state budget comes first and then work on the land bill will begin.