

Rep. Evaluates Native Role in Legislature

"Although it was rather hectic, it was an eye opener in many ways," said Rep. William Hensley. "It's good to realize that politics is the overriding consideration is the legislature."

The recently adjourned state legislative session was the first in which four freshman native legislators served. Along with Hensley, there were: John Sackett, Jules Wright and John Westdahl.

Hensley was asked what role he and his fellow native lawmakers played in the recent session.

"Our role has been on one of informing and educating urban legislation, but reapportionment has left us no other choice."

Governor Walter J. Hickel has called the session "productive" and Willie Hensley commented.

"Many of the bills are yet to be proven. It will take time

whether this has been a productive session. Much of what was passed has been considered before. There was really no

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Rep. Evaluates . . .

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reason that we couldn't have passed everything the Governor wanted because he had the votes in both houses."

Hensley said there were certain bills he was happy about, especially the enabling bill on Senator E. L. Bartlett's housing program for the rural areas, and the creation of the NORTH Commission, a ten-man advisory board within the Governor's office to develop plans for the economic development of the North.

"In both these areas," Hensley said, "much of the success of the two programs hinge upon the Governor and what he does with them. The need for employment in my district (District 17), being the main reason for our support of the Arctic economic development.

"If development arrives without enabling the people of the area to acquire a better standard of living, then we'd have to view the development as a failure."

On the pre-registration bill that was defeated, Hensley said, "I think it is very fortunate that the Republican party realized the pre-registration was not in the best interest of the state. It has always been used as a restriction against certain classes of people at election time and the tremendous cost, and the lack of fraud in elections does not show a need for pre-registration.

"The first draft of the bill certainly would have drastically reduced native voting in the state. Besides being unduly difficult to qualify as a voter, it would only have added to the difficulties in getting people to vote in both urban and rural areas."

Hensley said his district did not suffer drastically in the first session of the new session of the new administration. He said that six new deputy magistrate positions have been established, and the district obtained a school addition at the village of Ambler and the completion of the Barrow airport project.

Hensley was disturbed that Kotzebue completely lost an airport project which was in the original budget, "but due to the extensive airline activity, we understand that a paving project is scheduled for 1969 and presumably, the extension will come next in the summer of 1968," he said.

Hensley plans to spend as much time as he can in the villages between sessions. He said he will probably leave the state on occasions.