

Stevens' Claims Talk with Juneau ANB 'Too General'

By KEN RICHARDS
Juneau, Alaska

Republican Senator Ted Stevens last week characterized his position on the Native Land Claims as "flexible and hopeful" and urged all concerned to "stay loose," in a brief appearance before Tlingit-Haida leaders in Juneau recently.

The Senator spoke and answered questions for an hour before 60 at the Juneau ANB Hall.

The Senator cited what he called the "inflexibility of approach by certain AFN leaders" as one factor holding up a claims settlement. He did not elaborate.

Describing his role as one of an "advocate," the Hickel-appointed law-maker remarked in general about the necessity of compromise legislation but did not commit himself on specific features of such a bill.

He emphasized he did not want to second-guess the legislation's future in his own Senate Interior Committee or the Congress as a whole.

The Senate Interior Committee recently voted against consideration of the AFN proposed legislation in favor of framing its own working document.

In response to direct questioning, Stevens noted that he now favored a revenue-sharing formula as a source of income for the cash settlement, but insisted that revenue-sharing must have a "dollar objective." He said only that he hoped the total cash settlement, including shared revenue, would "exceed \$500 million."

He said he opposed a perpetual percentage over-ride on leasable minerals. Stevens said he expected the Senate Interior Committee to finish its work by February and submit a bill to the floor.

Saying only that he favored conveyance of title to "presently occupied villages," the Senator did not indicate a position on how much acreage such a feature would include. He left open the definition of "village" and "presently occupied."

Stevens attributed the recent "consternation" in Southeast Alaska over the land claims to the AFN's bill provision which would reserve all land until Native land-selection had been completed.

There have been objections in Southeast that such a provision would cancel current timbering contracts and restrain development of municipalities. There is no likelihood, however, according

to Stevens, that such a provision would become law.

ANB Grand President Richard

Stitt, who chaired the session, called the meeting "good exposure for both sides, but, too, gen-

eral."

The Senator was presented with the official minutes of the

recent 57th Annual ANB Convention by ANB Grand Secretary Dr. Walter Sobeloff.