

AFN May Take Hands Off Policy On Senate Bill, Work on House

Now that a natives land claims bill has reached the floor of the Senate, indications are that the Alaska Federation of Natives will not voice its objections until the bill reaches the House.

A question of what to do has been a hard one for the organization that represents Alaska's 55,000 Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts, said Eben Hopson, executive director of the AFN.

He stressed that he is not sure at this point what tactic the AFN will take on the Senate floor.

However, he said, "We have been advised by both our counsel and our senators that if we open up the bill on the floor we may loose more in the long run

than if we just let it go through the Senate."

The consensus seems to be, he continued, that the best chance of amending the bill is in the House.

So rather than fight for changes on the Senate floor, the organization might just wait until the bill reaches the House and there make a concentrated effort to effect changes.

Hopson, who planned to leave for Washington on Monday, said that in the House the AFN would not be tied down to any recommendations it might have made in the Senate, thus leaving the group's position in the House an open question.

John Borbridge, first vice-president of the AFN, plans to join Hopson in Washington later in the week. No other leaders will be sent Hopson added, due to a lack of funds.

To discuss the bill and perhaps what action the AFN will take on the House side, the organization has scheduled a board meeting for June 18, 19, and 20.

The Senate bill calls for a \$500 million cash compensation a two per cent share in oil and gas revenues from public lands and lands selected by the state and tentatively approved for patents up to \$500 million, and 4.5 million acres in fee simple plus sur-

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face rights to about 5 million.

One main objection voiced thus far by native leaders has been that the land provisions are inadequate. Originally, the organization had requested 40 mil-

lion acres.

Also, when it appeared certain that the bill would provide for a fixed amount in royalties rather than a perpetual royalty as requested by the AFN, the organization requested one million acres of mineral lands, half of which could be selected north of the Brooks range. The request was not included in the bill.

Opposition from other groups has arisen over an oil lease provision that was deleted from the bill. The provision would have permitted competitive bidding on oil leases on public lands in Alaska.

Under current laws, a person who files first can obtain a 2,560 acre lease by paying a \$10 filing fee and 50 cents per acre per year to the federal government.

Supporters of the present law contend that competitive bidding would allow only large monied interests to hold mineral leases in Alaska while supporters of competitive leasing say that the federal government could make millions of dollars on leases in the rich North Slope oil area.