

*Perhaps by End of September—*

# Chances Appear Good for 4th Land Claims Payment

By MARGIE BAUMAN

Chances appear good that Alaska's regional Native corporations will receive by the end of September a fourth land claims payment totalling \$70 million.

President Roger Lang of the Alaska Federation of Native Inc. said Monday that the federal appropriation of land claims funds had already been approved, more than a month earlier than last year's payment.

"But the problem is nobody is quite sure of the status of the roll yet," Lang said.

The roll Lang referred to is the list of Alaska Natives enrolled under the land claims act. More than 75,000 persons are enrolled and more are still trying to get on the list.

(The Enrollment Coordinating Office, under direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, has been issuing new lists on a monthly basis since the celebrated "final roll" was presented to congregated representatives of the regional corporations at Anchorage about one year ago.)

Still, Lang was optimistic about an earlier payment this time and last week sent telegrams to each regional corporation advising them of the forthcoming payment.

"That's quite a thing to gear up for," he noted. "Most of them will make the payment within 30-60 days after receiving the money."

Lang said he was surprised, when he made a check on the process of the appropriations to find out it was already approved.

"Somebody must have really steamrolled both Houses," he said. "Last year, it was October before we even got an appropriation signed."

The land claims act, signed in December, 1971, directs a series of 11 federal payments to Alaska Native people totalling \$462.5 million.

The distribution of federal funds is broken down to:

\$12,500,000 during the 1st year;

\$50,000,000 for the 2nd fis-

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# Claims Payment . . .

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cal year;

\$70,000,000 each for the 3rd, 4th and 5th fiscal years;

\$40,000,000 during the 6th fiscal year;

\$30,000,000 during each of the next five years.

The state's payment to the Native people totals \$500,000,000 (in monies derived from a two per cent royalty and two per cent of rentals and bonuses from leases of land).

The amount generated from the state, of course, won't become significant until the pipeline is complete and the oil is flowing.

## RED TAPE

While the money is coming, there are still problems with the enrollment; problems which could delay release of funds to the stockholders, who are for the first five years to receive directly 10 per cent of the total payment. (This will amount to approximately \$90 per person).

Non-village stockholders will, in addition, receive another payment, this year totaling about \$400 a piece.

The enrollment office, Lang acknowledges, has had its problems, or "mitigating circumstances" as he calls them.

First, the enrollment office, headquartered in the same building as the AFN, Inc. at 16th and C streets in Anchorage, has been forced to assign staff to work on problems generated from the proposed 13th regional corporation.

From the start, the enrollment office "has been fairly well understaffed and as a result hasn't met any time schedules; even those they set up by themselves," Lang noted. (Of late, the lengthy updated enrollment list, promised to each of the 12 regional corporations by the first week in June, was delivered in mid-July.)

The enrollment office has also on occasion been plagued by memorandums from the Bureau of Indian Affairs "regarding how to pick people off of the roll," Lang criticized. This shows up some basic differences in thinking between the Native people and the Interior Department, Lang said wryly. The Native corporations have been making an all-out effort to get everyone they feel should be included onto the roll, in the face of a barrage of red tape from the Interior Department. An example of those excluded is a young man in Galena who failed to enroll because he was in the Army in Vietnam while enrollment was taking place.

Legislation has been introduced in Congress and a suit filed by the Alaska Legal Services Corporation in an attempt to get a number of persons who meet all requirements for enrollment listed as stockholders.

But if Congress is in no hurry to extend enrollment, the appropriations are at least coming through.