

## Extraordinary Meeting . . .

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strative means. The bill is on the desk of the President. His signature will make it law. Like a guidebook to the convention, the 48-page bill and report of the House-Senate Conference Committee is the focus this week in the brightly lit student union building of Alaska Methodist University.

Delegates convene in two sides of the full floor cafeteria. "The congress of the United States has acted on a bill that will make history not only in Alaska but in the world," Don Wright opened the convention.

Symbolically, the convention began with the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

"Some of us individuals may have thoughts on the fairness of this legislation," he told the more than 400 native representatives present for the opening. "Some of us are not satisfied," Wright said, "but we have to recognize we are American citizens, citizens of the state of Alaska, as well as products of our heritage."

"The wording in the statutes," he said, as he held up a copy of the bill, is very complex and difficult. With that he gave the convention its mandate: to study the bill, ask questions, and obtain answers from their leaders, lawyers and staff and bring back the bill and its provisions to their home villages.

Unlike other AFN conventions, this one has been organized by regions. Already, by Thursday afternoon, over 400 people had signed in. Over 500 were expected by the week and when weather in Southeast Alaska was expected to clear and people would be getting off for the week end.

Delegates came from most villages and from AFN organizations in parts of the lower 48. One man, from Portland, Oregon, explained that the small Portland Alaska Native Association had heard about the convention Wednesday afternoon and

had two delegates on a night flight to Anchorage.

Most village representatives seem to think Alaska Natives can live with the settlement provisions. "40 million acres of land can be an infinite amount with proper planning," commented Larry Petersen of Fort Yukon. "The question is what the villages can do with it."

For this all important convention, delegates organized into regional grouping. At once villages began to clarify their regional associations. As regions they will caucus to discuss the bill.

Through Thursday afternoon, officials of the Department of the Interior answered questions on how the bill will be implemented. On Friday AFN Washington counsel will explain the bill point by point, section by section.

Saturday morning 65,000 copies of the Tundra Times special land rights edition will be available for distribution to every Alaska native with copies of the entire bill and committee report enclosed.

"Our village doesn't know what to make of the bill yet," explained representative Walter Townsend of Yakutat. "So we sent some representatives up here."

Here in Anchorage caucusing in the student union, being ferried around by special AFN buses, are the people who must explain the bill and clarify its complex provisions to their fellow villagers. Some details of the bill, they foresee, will be changed by court action.

One government official expected court action against a provision in the bill which counts pending native allotments against the 40 million acre land settlement.

Other provisions, leaders expect, can be changed by pressure on the Secretary of Interior, who is given broad authority in interpreting the bill.

## Organizations' History . .

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active contamination.

At approximately the same time, the federal government also began planning a dam on the Yukon River near Rampart. Although this project, too, was ultimately abandoned, it threatened to flood the Yukon flats, a territory used by some 2,000 Athabaskan Indians as a source of food.

It was the activities of the state government, however, that posed the biggest threat to Native land rights. By the Statehood Act of 1958, the state was authorized to select over 100 acres of land from the public domain.

It began to select lands of mineral potential, most of which included lands traditionally used for subsistence purposes by Natives. The result was spate of protests to state land selections and blanket claims to wide areas of historic Native use.

The Native organizations did not initiate the land claims process. The earliest claims that challenged state selections were filed in late 1961 and early 1962 for the individual villages of Northway, Minto, Tanacross and Lake Aleknagik by the BIA. Other individual villages followed suit, such as Nenana and Stevens Village in 1963.

However, the Native organizations transformed the land claims from random and scattered protests against governmental incursions into a forceful, coordinated political movement that has pressured the federal government to meet the Natives'

demands. Thus, it was the massive claims filed by regional organizations throughout the state in 1965 and 1966 that finally forced the federal government to propose a "land freeze" to prevent state selections prior to determination of Native land rights.

Some of the regional organizations had been in existence for years before they filed their claims. The AVCP, for example, organized in 1962 but did not file a claim until 1966.

But other organizations, such as the Northwest Alaska Native Association and the Arctic Slope Native Association, came into existence in 1965 and 1966 for the primary purpose of filing a land claim.

The Native organizations are therefore responsible for the Native land claims as a political movement. But all of these organizations have interests and concerns beyond the land issue which were either inborn or gradually acquired.

Education, housing, employment, community development, sanitation, local government, and other problems of village Alaska are now typically items of business at regional association meetings. With passage of a Native land claims settlement act by Congress, the regional associations will have for the first time real economic and other resources to deal with these problems.

In the future, Native politics will turn around the regional associations.

Regardless, the Alaska Federation of Natives has reached a crossroad and one that will change the shape of Alaska for many decades to come. Already

the emphasis on regional development, on political amalgamation, on economic enterprise, is sharper—more real. "When you think about it,"

remarked one native delegate, "last week natives in Alaska owned 500,000 acres of land. Next week they will own 40 million. That's a big step."

## TT History - Claims Struggle . . .

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'public lands' in Alaska tracts of land around all native villages. . . (to) afford protection to the natives against any encroachment by the states while all parties await the eventual definition by Congress of aboriginal land rights."

And in 1963 about 1,000 Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts from twenty-four villages signed their names to a petition to Secretary Udall asking that land around Alaska native villages be "frozen" and closed to all selection.

Thus, as it is recorded in the TUNDRA TIMES, the grass roots impetus to the movement began, culminating this week in passage of the native land claims bill.

Among other continuing stories in the Tundra Times are the following:

— The coming together of all the Natives throughout Alaska for political action for their common good.

— Such unity enabled Alaska natives to succeed in battles against such proposals as the Rampart Dam and Project Chariot, which threatened hunting and fishing areas and the location of some villages.

— The problem of employment in the villages throughout Alaska. Stories in the Times do not yet reflect that this problem has been reached a solution, but passage of the land claims bill pre-

sents some hope for Alaska natives to provide their own economic base through utilization of their land and mineral resources.

— Problems of alcoholism in Alaska.

— Through the combined efforts of the city, the state, and federal government, Fairbanks is beginning a pilot program which will provide a full program of treatment and counseling for the alcoholic.

— Problems involved in hunting rights of Alaska Natives.

Prior to the publication of the first issue of the TUNDRA TIMES, two Barrow men were arrested for shooting ducks and geese for subsistence, and, as a result of their arrest, 138 Eskimos went out and took ducks and appeared before the arresting officer, demanding their arrest.

— This began a battle of several years, recorded in the TUNDRA TIMES.

In a similar case in Canada, Judge J.H. Sissons ruled that the Migratory Birds Convention Act of 1916 has no application to natives hunting for food.

— Not so, said game agents in Alaska. "That's one man's opinion," but they finally yielded to public pressure and the native was once again allowed to carry out his ancient right to hunt for food anytime of the year.

— The involvement of an overall

educational plan for Alaska which will meet the needs of all its people.

The TUNDRA TIMES began with an editorial cry for vocational and professional education for all Alaskans and for the kind of education needed to bridge ancient and modern cultures.

At that time over 1,000 Alaskan students had to go to the lower 48 states to complete their education. This has been reduced to about 250.

Stories involving education have told about the establishment of the William E. Beltz vocational school in Nome, regional high schools, Headstart and Boarding programs and bilingual educational programs in native schools.

Directly related to this has been a recording of efforts made in the state to enrich our modern culture with the culture of the past.

— Problems of housing in rural Alaska.

During the past few years some strides have been made with housing constructed in Nome, Bethel and Minto.

— And the pages of TUNDRA TIMES record the collective bravery of Alaskans during the Good Friday earthquake and Alaskans' dogged determination in rebuilding their state.

— An example: The villagers of Chenega (half of the town's population was killed by a sea wave following the earthquake) surveyed the debris of what used to be their town and rebuilt the village on a new location.

Other highlights from past editions of the Tundra Times include:

— The oil boom and the dilemma concerning the Trans Alaska Pipeline;

— Anaktuvik Pass residents receiving the distinction of having the highest radiation count in the nation;

— Cannikin;

— The investigation of the Prioblofs and improvement in the living conditions of Alaska Natives there, for which our editor, Howard Rock, was instrumental.

— An investigation of Federal Electric's threatening to fire DEWLine non-native employees married to native wives if the husbands attempted to spend nights with their families—and a report of the subsequent change in policy.

There have been lighter sides, too, such as the story of the local prestige world famous Eskimo parka maker Laura Wright received when Elvis Presley sent her an order for a gold velvet parka—or the quiet humor found in Eskimo legends and poems such as "Eskimo Woman's Love Song."

Here I am sitting,  
And I am sitting still;  
And I see two kayaks coming.  
Here I am sitting,  
I am sitting still  
And two men are coming  
To court me.  
And here I am a ne'er do well  
And I'm not very good looking.

Over the years, the Tundra Times, in its stories, its legends, its poems, has reflected the goals established in its first editorial: to be the "Medium to air the views of the native organizations . . . (and to) strive to keep informed on matters of interest to all natives of Alaska..."

## Bill Sails through . . .

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tions would have been more desirable, he said.

The Chairman was also disappointed in losing a battle in the conference committee for competitive leasing of land in Alaska. He also lost on provisions which would have established statewide, urban and national corporations for management of settlement proceeds.

The only member of the conference committee who refused to sign the conference committee report was Representative John Saylor (R-Penn.). Saylor had previously attempted to block progress of the Conference Committee—an attempt thwarted by Chairman Wayne Aspinall.

At one point during the conference, Representative Saylor was the one member necessary to constitute a quorum. Stepping outside the committee room he asked Congressman Aspinall to call the quorum.

"I can't hear you," responded Aspinall.

When Saylor stepped back inside to repeat his request, the Chairman said,

"I call the quorum. You are the quorum."

The question of whether the provisions of the bill are acceptable to the Alaska Federation of Natives is expected to be decided this week when that body convenes on Thursday to review the bill.

The legislation provides nearly everything the AFN sought when it first brought its claim before Congress—40 million acres in fee, \$500 million in appropriations, the two per cent overriding royalty.

In a statement to the press today, AFN President Don Wright praised the members of Congress who worked on the bill—but left the question of acceptance by natives open. There are provisions in the bill

which had earlier been viewed as undesirable. The delegation to the convention will decide whether these drawbacks constitute grounds on which to request a presidential veto.

Some of the most significant provisions likely to be questioned by natives include the following:

— A 13th corporation in addition to the 12 regional corporations is established at the discretion of natives living outside Alaska. This could thin out village rolls and selections.

— Land selection must be contiguous to villages and limited to within 25 township withdrawals surrounding villages. No free floating selections are authorized with the exception of two million acres hardship cases.

— Reservations, with the exception of Metlakatla, will not have the option of retaining their land. They will participate in selections under the same formula as other villages.

There is no provision for subsistence rights outside of the 40 million acres of land selected by natives.

— Control of revenues from corporate investments is more decentralized than desired by the AFN. Regional corporations are required to pass on 50 per cent of their profits to village corporations.

— Villagers will not be granted mineral rights in Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 4 and in wild-life refuges.

With those exceptions the AFN was largely successful during its lobbying efforts. In a sense natives were participants in the conference committee. Senator Mike Gravel maintained a continuing flow of information to the AFN throughout the meeting. The AFN was able to evaluate the proceedings and make its position known to the conferees.