

# Wright: AFN to Approve Bill--

## Statewide Group Head Says Bill is Good

"I think it's a pretty good bill," AFN president Don Wright commented on the Alaska Native Land Claims Bill on the opening day of the reconvened sixth annual AFN convention.

The convention, which originally convened in Fairbanks on October 9, recessed three days later till a bill would

emerge from the House-Senate Conference Committee.

Last week that bill became a reality.

"The basic requirements of the bill are not what we hoped for, but it will do a good job for the people if the people handle it okay," Wright said.

He saw no question about

the AFN convention approving it. "They will," he said.

In the coming year Wright foresaw an ever expanding role for the Alaska Federation of Natives.

During the next twelve months, he said, an active AFN board will hold monthly mee-

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tings in many areas of Alaska.

"I think the AFN will continue to grow stronger, economically and politically, as a service organization on a statewide basis for assisting and initiating statewide programs," he said.

Focus for AFN efforts this year will be in Juneau where the Alaska State Legislature must pass laws, to "implement and dovetail into the measures," Wright said.

The first actual jobs in implementing the land claims legislation for the AFN will be devising a method of conducting a roll and compiling plans for land selection. Two years are provided by the bill for compiling a complete list of Alaska natives.

"Decisions on mergers between regions, and which ones, must be made within one year," Wright commented.

Already several regions are talking about mergers. Among the prime candidates for merger seem to be the Tanana Chiefs and Copper River Region, which have been talking about combining for some time.

All of the regions, Wright believes are fairly well organized though some must go through some formalities. As AFN president, Wright intends to spend most of the next year in Anchorage, Juneau, and periodically in Washington, working on implementation of the bill and providing for a continuity program.

"The entire Alaska delegation and Governor Egan all deserve tremendous credit for their open, fair-minded approach to this issue and I want to thank them," Wright added.

"The leadership of the United States Congress that stood firmly behind the natives and the leaders from your villages who labored long and hard did the best they could," he told the assembled native representatives earlier. There were tremendous pressures on them. All of the views of all of these people are summarized in this one document."

Throughout the convention Wright received dozens of personal congratulations from AFN members and observers.