

AFN Asks Gruening To Introduce New Bill

The Alaska Federation of Natives at the decision of the steering committee of the governor's Land Claims

Task Force last weekend asked Sen. Ernest Gruening to introduce the latest land bill drafted by the Department of the Interior.

The steering committee is largely made up of the members of board of directors of the AFN.

The committee, although with some reluctance, authorized Emil Notti, president of the AFN, to send Sen. Gruening the following wire:

"On behalf of Alaska Federation of Natives we request that the Secretary of the Interior's new bill on native land claims be introduced in the Senate.

"While the Alaska Federation of Natives finds the bill unacceptable in its present form we are preparing amendments which would remove our objections to the bill and we believe that early hearings are in the best interest of all parties concerned."

The steering committee was scheduled to meet with Governor Walter J. Hickel

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last Friday at 2:30 p.m. in Anchorage but the governor did not make the trip to Anchorage.

He had been advised by his doctors to rest up a bit after making extensive travels and attending conferences within the last few weeks. The doctors found the governor in exhausted condition and advised rest.

In the discussion of the steering committee, Don Wright told the group that "we have to hand the ball to Congress" so it can start work on land legislation.

This was necessary, Wright said, so amendments can be proposed for consideration by congressional committees.

"The bill is like a Christmas tree," said Barry Jackson, land claims attorney for the group. "All we must do is to decorate it."

The Task Force group also decided to seek Governor Hickel's support and understanding in regard to amendments.

Emil Notti said that on behalf of the AFN, he would

ask Governor Hickel to fund a meeting of the full Land Claims Task Force so that group can consider amendments to the new Interior land bill.

Notti thought that the Task Force should meet as soon as practicable.

The steering committee strongly hinted that 40 million acres of land as contained in the compromise bill S. 2906, would be asked as an amendment.

It was also pointed out that \$500 million for land compensation would be asked in lieu of the Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas revenues.

Oil and gas revenues for land compensation were suggested by Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall in November, 1967 in Anchorage when he met with the native leaders.

Udall, however, left the above proposed idea out in the latest Interior bill. He also reinstituted 50,000 acres as a maximum land to be given each village.