

House panel OKs Aleut bill for restitution

by A.J. McClanahan

Tundra Times publisher

A bill to compensate Aleuts taken from their homes during World War II was approved by the House Judiciary Committee on a 31 to 11 vote last week, and Aleut leaders say approval by the panel is a major hurdle for them.

Also pleased was Congressman Don Young, R-Alaska, the sponsor of the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Restitution Act.

"I feel very pleased that the committee moved the bill out," Young said, adding he expects it to be discussed on the floor of the House this week.

"Everybody's elated," said Alice Petrivelli, chairman of The Aleut Corp. "I just hope they pass it so the people who deserve it will share in it."

(Continued on Page Thirteen)

• Each Aleut would get \$12,000

(Continued from Page One)

The legislation, House Bill 1631, calls for each eligible Aleut to receive \$12,000. In addition, it would create a \$5 million fund to benefit the six Aleut communities affected during World War II and a \$1.4 million fund to provide compensation to affected Aleut villages for church property lost, damaged or destroyed during the war.

The bill also would require that \$15 million be paid to The Aleut Corp. in lieu of regaining Attu Island, which is now in the Alaska National Wildlife

Refuge system.

Young said the committee made no significant changes in the bill before approving it. He predicted that it will pass this year because it has a lot of "sound support."

He said he was distressed, however, at some of the comments in the committee hearing by some of the members who complained that the bill was not necessary because the Aleuts were moved to camps to save their lives.

During World War II the Aleuts were forced from their homes and

taken in many cases with less than 24 hours notice to cramped quarters in former canneries in Southeastern Alaska. Many became ill in the camps and died.

Also, while the people were gone, soldiers destroyed or damaged many of their personal belongings back in their homes, as well as destroying or taking priceless icons from the churches and their homes.

Young said it appeared that some of those complaining about the bill did not understand just what happened to the Aleuts.