

State is charged with holding back payments to the Alaska Native Fund

Borbridge claims many Natives are hurt by delay

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Sealaska President John Borbridge has charged the State of Alaska with making payments into the Alaska Native Fund of less than the two percent of oil and gas ad valorem taxes as required by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Borbridge has also charged that the state has curtailed payments of bonuses, rentals and royalties received by the federal government for mineral lands in Alaska in the last two fiscal years.

Borbridge said that untimely payments to the Alaska Native Fund are significant and "as a result the state has disenfranchised a substantial number of Alaska Natives." Borbridge claims that payments made into the fund after December 18, 1976 would be excluded from the mandatory 10 percent distribution to all regional corporation shareholders as provided under the claims act.

Borbridge, in a letter dated December 8, 1976 to Governor Hammond, asked for the state's rationale in making delayed payments into the fund but did not

Payments ...

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receive a response and on March 18, 1977 inquired again of the Governor's office and received telephone response this week that assured him an answer within a matter of days.

Borbridge has raised the objection to the delays without notification being given to the regional corporations and says that "we were required to ferret the facts out for ourselves." Borbridge has also brought the matter to the attention of the Alaska Federation of Natives. Byron Mallott, president of the AFN said that Mr. Borbridge is in fact expressing a concern of the Federation and said that "Roger (Lang), Sam (Kito) and all the regional corporations are staying on top of it to make sure it stays in the budget."

Mallott said that the Governor's budget for FY-78 includes a \$40 million appropriation in state administration for payment to the Alaska Native Fund but that the appropriation is not in the House Finance Budget. He said that the state "has got to and it will" make the payments into the fund.

Sealaska discovered the payment discrepancies when payment received were less than expected. Alaska State Statutes state: "Payment to Alaska Native Fund. When the tax levied under this chapter is payable an amount equivalent to not less than two percent of the tax shall be paid by the state from oil and gas royalties, bonuses and rentals into the Alaska Native Fund established by Section 6 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act—until payments paid into the Fund equal \$5000,000,000.00."