

# Emil Notti Declares Land Claims Effort Has Not Lost Momentum

Alaskan native leaders, following three days of intensive meetings, are returning home today from Washington, D.C. The delegation met Tuesday with Interior Secretary Walter Hickel.

Other meetings include conferences with House Interior Committee Chairman Wayne Aspinall and several members of Congress.

The AFN position as revealed in Washington had basic similarity to policy decisions reported in the May 29 issue of the Tundra Times.

The Federation requests 40 million acres in fee title, meaning all rights would be included, as well as \$500 million in compensation over a nine-year period for lands previously lost.

The establishment of a state corporation, with heavy emphasis on locally controlled regional corporations was also advocated. Based on population, AFN requested 500 acres per person surrounding each village or approximately four townships for each settlement.

Lands withdrawn without consulting native villages, such as national parks and military reservations, would be available to natives under the AFN proposal.

The leaders also are asking a 2 per cent over-riding royalty on revenues from lands as compensation for lands to the State and federal governments.

Official reaction to AFN policy by members of Congress and the Nixon administration has not been noted, although rumors persist that interest is dwindling in achiev-

ing an expedient settlement.

AFN President Emil Notti notified the Tundra Times of his response to the recent statements, one of which was credited by the Alaska Scouting Service to Sen. Ted Stevens.

"Suggestions that the Land Claims Bill has lost momentum in

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# Notti Denies Momentum Loss...

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Congress because the native people have not stated their specific position on a settlement is without basis," Notti said.

"Native people in Alaska would like to see a speedy and fair solution to the land problem. The problem has been with the Congress and us for 102 years and no solution was even proposed until the native people got organized and took the initiative.

"We accelerated a solution to the problem and we will continue to press for a speedy settlement.

However, in the rush for a quick settlement we are not going to make any foolish judgements as to what might be a fair settlement.

"If the State of Alaska gets one to two billion dollars for some companies to go look for oil on 300 to 500 thousand acres of land, we would be making another Manhattan Island deal if we get locked in too soon on a firm position.

"Whatever our position turns out to be, it will be based on what we think is fair for the native people of Alaska to receive for the inheritance of their forefathers—their land.

"I question the motive of those who say we must tie our position down by a certain date or Congress won't act. Congress has to act. The problem will not disappear without their acting. They act deliberately based on all the information they can gather. We will do the same thing.

"We will move as fast as a good settlement will allow us to act based on the best advice we can get," Notti concluded.

AFN First Vice-President John Borbridge lent strength to this position in conclusions drawn from meetings in Washington this month. Borbridge urged comprehensive planning on the part of AFN for the settlement, saying "If you don't plan, then somebody else will plan for us."

Borbridge reached what he termed significant conclusions

from the conferences. He commented on the postponement of hearings of proposed land bills by the House Interior Committee.

"At the time of my visit, the Department of the Interior had not completed its draft of the land claims bill, and for this reason there was a postponement," Borbridge stated.

Approaches to revenue sharing and selection of non-contiguous mineral lands received what Borbridge termed "more sympathetic attention and support than was anticipated."

"There is a clearly evident support and sympathy for the land claims of Alaska's natives," he added. "Timing is very important," Borbridge concluded.

Speculation that Governor Keith Miller might appear at the Washington meetings was widespread earlier this week. Nothing did materialize, and no attempt to reconcile prospective State position with AFN policies has been made public.

The recent discovery of vast oil reserves has been a major topic of speculation from some sources. Indications are that some members of Congress are beginning to feel that the State should carry a significant share of the financial settlement.

Another pertinent issue under discussion is the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, slated to traverse a number of claim areas. Interior Secretary Hickel, in a survey of native opinion, sent telegrams to organizations claiming land along the pipeline route.

The telegram read, "Representatives of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Co. have recently requested from my department, right of way privileges to construct an 800 mile pipeline from the Prudhoe Bay area to Valdez. I am primarily concerned with protecting the best interests of the natives of Alaska.

"A portion of the proposed pipeline may cross lands that your members have claimed under the

Alaska native land claims. In order to insure that your voices are heard, I would appreciate your thoughts on this right of way request. You will be contacted by representatives of my department at a later date," Hickel said.

An interesting consideration in the right of way request is the failure of Hickel to contact the Tanana Chiefs Conference, over whose claims the proposed pipeline route will fall.

The pipeline would also pass near Mt. Fairplay, in the area sought by the Village of Tanacross in their controversial 1950 petition.

Initial reaction by native leaders suggests extreme caution among the native groups involved. In answering the Hickel telegram, AFN President Notti stated, "I would like to suggest that the AFN Steering Committee and those claimants whose land the pipeline crosses meet at the earliest date possible to discuss the right of way request."

In a statement to the Tundra Times, Notti specifically mentioned the Arctic Slope Native Association, the Tanana Chiefs Conference, the Copper Valley Native Association, and the Chugach Native Association as groups that should receive primary consideration.

"When villages are approached for a waiver, they should immediately do two things. Number one, contact their lawyer; number two, advise the AFN office," Notti said.

Just as he had urged a coordinated approach to the Goldberg issue and the AFN policy decisions, Notti urged unity on the pipeline issue.

"Our greatest strength will lie in approaching this situation with a unified front," he concluded.