WRIGHT: BILL IS GOOD . . .

tings in many areas of Alaska.
"I think the AFN will con tinue to grow stronger, economically and politically, as a ser vice 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 "in dovetail into the "implement and Wright said.

GAYLORD, the dandy vulture with finicky tastes....



Meet him in **BROOM-HILDA...** appearing in

TUNDRA TIMES

Interview with Senator Stevens...

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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 plans the selection of the provided by the bill for compiling the public that of black matters.

a complete list of Alaska natives. "Decisions on mergers be-tween 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 An-chorage, Juneau, and periodi-cally in Washington, working on implementation of the bill and providing for a continuity pro-

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 firm-ly 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 docu-

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

mands of native people, and has built into it protections for the non native community to assure that their rights will be protec-

Still, Stevens said, "it's going to require real leadership to see that the older people of the villages do receive benefits from the settlement." the settlement.

These older people, he said, "are substantially outnumbered and are not going to benefit from scholarships and long range programs...Many of them finan-ced the search for settlement and ought to benefit before they

The land provision of the bill was the most difficlut all the way through, Stevens said, because "it was hard to get people to focus on the large size of the State of Alaska and it was difficult to get people speaking for Alaska natives to accept the concept of contiguity."
"Once we did what I think

the village people wanted any-way," he said, "and identified the lands around the villages, we had no problem."

Senator Stevens credits no person or group of persons with passage of the bill, pointing out that it "was sort of like the statehood bill" in that it required a united effort on the part of many individuals and

groups to succeed.

Native leaders "made a substantial effort and succeeded, Stevens said. "We arrange arranged meetings for Don Wright with the President. These were very effective. Don and the majority of the AFN members there in Washington acted in a very responsible way

He feels, though, that criti-

cism of a meeting between Aladelegation ska's congressional delegation and Governor William A. Egan was "unfortunate.

was untortunate."

John Borbridge, President of
the Tlingit and Haida Indians'
Central Council has been quoted
as saying that the meeting "created a deep sense of native resentment."

The meeting was held, Stevens said, at the request of Senator Alan Bible (D-Nevada), who charged the elected officials with the task of coming up with

with the task or comma a united position.
"Certainly the native leaders were involved all the way along,"
Stevens said. "I had met with the night bethe AFN leaders the night be-

Pointing to an article in a recent issue of the Tundra Tines in which Don Wright was described as saying that he was "greatly disappointed in the inability of the members of the Alaska Congressional delegation Ataska Congressional delegation and the Governor of Alaska to unify on one solid land claims position," Stevens laughed and said, "Then we got together to do it and we got criticized."

Senator Stevens said that he believes the President will sign

Then, he said, the Secretary of the Interior will have a short time frame for action. "We did

Not only will the secretary have to make basic decisions about land withdrawals, Stevens said, but he will also have set up procedures for hardship determinations.
"I talked with the secretary

the day after the oill passed," he said. "He is going to set up department-wide briefings and

create a task force to start lining up procedures to follow in carrying out his heavy duties under the bill."

And, once the bill is signed, villages will have to start earmarking the land they want in terms of what they think the population will be. This can't be final, however, Stevens said, until the role of all natives is complete.

Because the state will be able to start selecting land immedia-tely-from land outside of the townships-Stevens said that we should see action from the state immediately.

Stevens also said that some of the things that aren't in the bill are significant by their omis-There is no competitive leasing provision in the legislation for example.

Nor is there any real restraint on the use of money "except that it flows through a corporate structure to the beneficiaries in-volved."

This is the first settlement in recent history, Stevens said, that has "not required a plan in advance from the people who are going to get the money." Is there an agreement be-

tween the federal administration and the AFN that the President will not sign the bill into law unless it is approved by AFN?

"I don't know if such an agreement exists or not," Stevens said. "I hope we don't have to cross that bridge.

"If this settlement, which is the most generous in all of history" won't do, "I don't think we'll ever get a native land claims bill through again..

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