

protect the Natives' use of the surface if its contractual obligations run to a local Native group than it would if its obligations run to a State or Federal official hundreds or thousands of miles away. Indeed, experience on the North Slope has proven that the Natives' use of land surface may very well be interfered with if it is not perfectly clear that the Natives own the mineral resources being exploited.

AFN approves of that portion of the Federal Field Bill which permits the Natives to receive the full benefit of the lands retained by them. While the Natives will only receive patent to the surface, section 10(g) provides that the mineral estate of these lands will be patented to a Native development corporation. (We are assuming that the administrative and priority problems previously noted can be resolved.) Although we have serious reservations about the scope and structure of the state-wide development corporation proposed by the Federal Field Bill, we recognize that it makes sense to have such resources administered by an entity larger than a village. Accordingly, the AFN proposal provides that all mineral resources on retained land shall be granted to and administered by regional Native development corporations.

Unfortunately, the Interior Bill does not permit the Natives to retain any interest in leaseable minerals. For the reasons already noted, such an artificial and unsupportable limitation should not be enacted into law.