

# 13th flounders again

## Would-be 13th region back to drawing board

By LAEL MORGAN

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The 13th Region, established under the Land Claims Settlement for Alaskan Natives living outside the state, is going back to the drawing board again as the result of the overturn of its recent election by Federal District Judge Oliver Gasch.

The challenge was brought by Frank Price, Jr. of Seattle on the grounds there was not a quorum present at the Salt Lake City, Utah, meeting where the election was held last January.

A new election is to be held later this year with a balanced slate of candidates from major opposing factions within the organization. The judge ordered that the 13th region be established and that non-resident Native associations nominate prospective incorporators for appointment by the Department of Interior. There were no details as to how the new region was to be incorporated and Interior handed that job to Congress.

Under the claims settlement Alaskan Natives who had left the state were given the option of enrolling with one of the 12 regional corporations or establishing their own—a 13th Region.

When enrollment was completed some 4,500 outsiders qualified and when they voted in 1973 the initial tabulation of the Department of Interior showed the majority against creation of the outside entity.

Pressed by a lawsuit filed by the Alaska Native Association of Oregon and the Alaska Federation of Natives International, Judge Gasch ruled at that time the required majority had actually voted in

favor of creation. Some 17 non-resident Alaskan Native associations sprang up

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and a power struggle ensued with the Alaska Federation of Natives International (AFNI) gaining control. It was AFNI's slate of officers that voters considered in Utah and AFNI that picked the meeting location.

Since only about 3% of 13th Region's stockholders live in Utah, the election site was open to question. An estimated 43 to 46% of the voters live in Washington State, 8 to 10% in Oregon and about 23% in California.

Despite the power struggle it appears the 13th Region will remain very much in the picture.

"There is no possibility the 13th Region will go under at this point," maintains Morris Thompson, commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. "But after the next election, would-be stockholders will be given the option of staying with the 13th or returning to Alaskan corporations. Supposedly stockholders will then be better informed."

But since 11 out of 12 resident corporations were against creation of the 13th, heavy recruitment programs can be expected and the ultimate enrollment of the 13th remains in question.