

Letters from Here and There

Would Serve Bush By Air Taxis

Box 488
Aniak, Alaska 99557
April 8, 1971

Dear Editor:

Commenting on front page article of March 31, "Bush Air Routes to Continue Under Subsidy", I tend to agree with the proposal of the Bureau of Operating Rights opinion that it would be a wiser move to suspend the bush routes now being served by Wien Consolidated Airlines, Inc. and Alaska Airlines, Inc.

To begin my findings on this matter; these routes are being served by these airlines at great expense to the tax-paying public without any savings to the rural people. The service in most areas is so inadequate in most instances, that the people choose to travel by air taxis most of the time.

On March 25, 26, & 27, 1971, the Association of Village Council Presidents met in Bethel. One of the most heated discussions in the meeting was that Wien Consolidated Airlines, Inc. should be made to either improve their services; allow another airlines to compete over the same routes; or get out altogether and let the air taxi operators serve the rural areas, because they are more responsive to the needs of the people.

From my own experience: I can load my plane with five people and fly from any point in the rural areas and if I charge the ticket rate that Wien charges I would do quite well. They are subsidized airlines, operating as an air taxi operator, at the expense of all the public.

If CAB examiner, Merritt Ruhlen, ruled in favor of Wien Consolidated Airlines, Inc., then I feel he is either not familiar with the feelings of the rural villagers or he is not responding to their complaints.

Before anything is decided, I believe it would be a wise move on the part of CAB to hold hearings on the larger villages of the "Bush". It should be left up to the people, rather than an arbitrary board who lives on the east coast of the United States.

Sincerely,
Fred A. Notti

Would Like ASNA General Meeting

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following letter was requested by the writer to be published in the *Tundra Times*.)

Box 505
Barrow, Alaska 99723
March 23, 1971

Joseph Upicksoun, President
Arctic Slope Native Association
Box 566
Barrow, Alaska 99723

Dear Joe,

With debate over a just settlement of the Alaska Native Claims intensifying, I would suggest that you schedule, at an early date, a general meeting of the members of the Arctic Slope Native Association. I am of the impression that many residents of the community, concerned about recent articles appearing in Alaska newspapers, have questions to ask about the content of those reports and of the reports and of the recent decisions that have been made by the board of directors of the Association. I believe that the people should have an opportunity to hear from the members of the board, express themselves, ask questions, and become better acquainted and informed with the pending legislation, the future course of the bills, and the possible consequences of the legislation on the people of Barrow and the other communities.

May I offer four topics for consideration at such a meeting.

As general background, I think it would be well to start with a general analysis of the various bills offered in the Congress to date and the provisions in each for land settlement, reimbursement for title yielded, and proposals to administer these terms. Few residents of Barrow have even a layman's knowledge of the bills. The people should know something about the ideas and suggestions that the Congress is considering and the ASNA's position as to each.

Secondly the press has recently given extensive coverage to the differences of opinion between ASNA and the Alaska Federation of Natives. Is ASNA presently associated with AFN? Are the differences between the two organizations so real as to warrant withdrawal by ASNA? Has ASNA not lost an effective forum to present its position on this issue and on the Native Claims Settlement legislation generally? Do you seek an endorsement from the members for the point of view set forth by the ASNA?

The development of an oil economy in the Prudhoe Bay region has begun to have a positive effect, albeit small, in the community through the payroll of the men employed there. Recently, Atlantic Richfield representatives asked whether it would not be possible or even practical for ASNA to go on record as being not actively opposed to further development of the industry predicated upon a prior just settlement of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Legislation. What would be the Association's response to this request? May I assume that the board, as a matter of policy, opposes all such future economic and industrial development? Is ASNA wise in ignoring the request from Atlantic Richfield?

Related to the oil industry is the question of the granting of a pipeline easement. Recent statements by the Executive Director of the Association, Charlie

Edwardsen, Jr., relative to the Trans-Alaska Pipeline project have led a number of people to question the position which has been set forth. The impression created is one of substantial, if not unanimous, opposition to any pipeline among the people of the Arctic Slope. I find that there is disagreement and dissatisfaction among the people on this point. Many others would like an explanation of the statements reported by the press. Has the Executive Director spoken for the board and the membership? Is the impression that he has conveyed one that is substantially supported by the membership? I sense some opposition in Barrow and, editorially, from at least one resident of Anaktuvuk Pass. Are we all not entitled to an explanation?

These and other matters - including, perhaps, a discussion of the proposed borough and reports of recent travels by yourself, the Director, and other board members - could serve as the basis of an informative discussion among the people.

Since the last general meeting, a lack of communication has developed between the board and the members. Many decisions are related to the proposed legislation and are made and explained only to the board. The public is left to obtain its information courtesy of AP or UPI. In a community as small as this, with an issue so important as this, the situation is intolerable. Communication between the leaders and the general membership in each village is necessary. The people have the right to be kept advised and informed as a settlement is enacted, and should not be left to enter objections or criticism after the fact.

Respectfully,
Bill Neakok
Box 505
Barrow, Alaska 99723