

# Gerard told Alaska concerns

Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs Forrest Gerard left Alaska this week with a full agenda of items of interest to Alaska Natives that he promised to look into immediately upon his return Washington.

And he said he was taking personal interest in restructuring the Alaska Regional Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

We're committed to trying to make some changes," Gerard responded in answer to questions about proposed BIA reorganization.

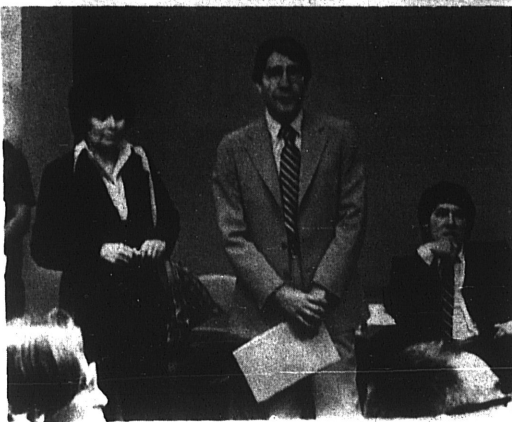
Gerard was presented with a list of Alaska Native concerns when he met with the Board of Directors of the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) at a special meeting in Anchorage Aug. 17.

Primary on the list were questions concerning the methods the Bureau of Indian Affairs is using when it denies enrollment applications for membership in Alaska's regional corporations.

Both Karl Armstrong of Koniag and Roy Huhndorf of the Cook Inlet Regional Association (CIRA)

complained that many applicants were being turned down for what appeared to be arbitrary and capricious reasons.

Armstrong and Huhndorf cited examples where  
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**HEAR ISSUES** - Assistant Secretary of the Interior Forrest Gerard (right) and his Alaska Assistant Irene Rowan being introduced to AFN Board of Directors. APIA President Pat Pletnikoff is in right background.

# • Gerard hears AFN issues

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one member of a family was allowed to be enrolled but another member of his immediate family might be denied enrollment, even though they had the same parent. And they both complained that there appeared to be no reasoning for such arbitrary decisions.

"How can a brother be in and his sister not?" Armstrong asked.

"It appears that some due process is being denied" Huhndorf added.

Jim Strickland, general counsel for the Thirteenth Corporation of Seattle, lent his support to Armstrong and Huhndorf, pointing out that recently only 123 of 473 applications for enrollment in his corporation

were approved and there was insufficient reasoning behind the denials.

Huhndorf said there was only a 30-day appeal period allowed for such denials, and that without knowing what the reason for the denial was, it was difficult to start the appeal process.

Armstrong asked that Gerard take a direct interest in the problem and asked that he see that there is more cooperation from BIA regional attorneys.

"This is a genuine request for compassion," said Armstrong.

Gerard also was asked about the lack of stipulations for Native Hire on the permits for the proposed Alaska Gasline project.

Irene Rowan, his special assistant for Alaska affairs, said Gerard's office has continually requested that these be put in. She pointed out that the major oil companies are opposed to such provisions on the grounds they drive up costs.

"Give us a strong resolution on this," Gerard asked.

Gerard promised also to look into the proposed closure of the BIA field office in Seattle and the movement of the services to Portland. Ray Paddock of Sealaska said the Seattle Office provides a wide variety of services to persons from his region and suggested that if the office is closed, its functions be moved to Everett, Washington, instead of to Portland.