

## Cowper commits to appoint three Alaska Natives to Commission

Now that Congress and the President have created the Joint Commission, the most important step in implementing the legislation will be the appointment of its 14 voting commissioners.

Seven are to be appointed by President Bush and seven by Governor Cowper. The President must appoint at least three Alaska Natives among his seven commissioners, and no more than two may be federal officials. The Act does not place the same requirements on the Governor's appointments, but Governor Cowper has voluntarily agreed to bind himself to the same standards, appointing at least three Alaska Natives and no more than two state officials among his seven commissioners.

As this newsletter goes to print, individuals and organizations in the Native community are already expressing interest and discussing the names of individuals (Natives and non-Natives alike) who might be named to the Commission by either of the two appointing authorities. In short, the process has already begun.

Any person who may be interested in being appointed to the Joint Commission should submit his or her written resume, with a cover letter specifying contact address and telephone number, to either or both the following offices:

For President Bush:

**Mr. Chase Untermeyer, Director of Presidential Personnel, The White House, Washington, DC 20500.**

For Governor Cowper:

**Ms. Penny Forsmo, Special Assistant to the Governor for Boards and Commissions, Office of the Governor, P.O. Box A, Juneau, AK 99811.**

Because the Cowper administration will leave office on Monday, December 3, 1990, the Governor has set November 1 as the deadline for receipt of resumes and letters of application for gubernatorial appointments to the Commission. No firm deadline is available from the White House as this newsletter goes to press, but AFN urges prospective applicants to submit applications for presidential appointments by the same date.

Knowledgeable observers predict that all 14 commissioners will not be appointed and in place until after January 1, 1991. (In addition, the ten *ex officio* members will not all be identified until after the Legislature and Congress have convened.)

The first meeting of the Commission will take place within 30 days of appointment of all 14 voting commissioners. Thus, barring significant delays in the appointment process now unfolding, the 24-month life of the Commission will last from early 1991 to early 1993, with its report due in late 1992.

The text of the Act [Section 12(b)(2)(E)] specifies that "... In making appointments to the Commission, the President and the Governor of Alaska shall give careful consideration to recommendations received from Alaska Native village or regional and state organizations." Native communities and organizations wishing to recommend or support the applications of individuals seeking to be appointed to the Commission either by the President or the Governor should submit letters of recommendation to the two individuals (Mr. Chase Untermeyer and Ms. Penny Forsmo) at the mailing addresses listed above.



*Governor Cowper in Tatitlek, April 1989, talking to village residents about the Prince William Sound oil spill.*

**GOVERNOR COWPER:** "This Commission signifies a new beginning in Alaska Native relations in Washington, D.C. It demonstrates that our nation's leaders understand that Alaska's villages are fundamentally different from urban communities, economically, historically & culturally.

"It also confirms that the public interest of this state is best served by maintaining the special status of Native people & the federal programs that allow them to assume responsibility for the social & cultural challenges facing them.

"This 14-member Commission is especially timely considering many of today's problems facing Alaska Natives - from alcohol abuse to the lack of economic opportunities - have reached crisis proportions. It will have a direct impact on how Alaska's Native people sustain the integrity of their culture & heritage as the state continues to grow & modernize."