

Tom Richards, Jr.'s Column--

Questions 13th Regional's Way of Selling Itself

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Amen.)

(c) 1973 by
THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.

If I had decided to enroll in the thirteenth regional corporation, I would hasten to redesignate my membership to one of the twelve Alaskan corporations at this time. A small group of would-be empire builders, using the name of Alaska Federation of Natives International, has just completed a mass mailing to Alaska Natives residing outside of the state.

Enclosed is a form letter encouraging prospective members of the thirteenth regional corporation to "vote ESK-IND-AL, 'the Thirteenth'." Conveniently, also enclosed is a ready-made form for electing enrollment in the thirteenth.

Conspicuously, both the May 25 mailing and the business reply envelope provided are postage-paid by the Corporate Trust Department of the Seattle-First National Bank. Understandably, the cost of postage for the mass mailing is a small price for the bank to pay for the rewards of handling corporate funds. If the battle of the thirteenth is to become a war of the bankers, I hope that the twelve Alaska Native corporations are able to call upon Alaskan bankers to finance a mailing to refute propaganda disseminated by the AFNI -

Seattle First group.

A war of the banks, however, strikes me as being a gross perversion of the intent of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement. But the Seattle group may already have initiated that battle by overtly romancing non-resident Natives for the creation of a corporate playground.

In arguing for the thirteenth, AFNI International claims the federal government may decide that regional corporations should pay for governmental services currently provided to Natives. Additionally, AFNI declares that the thirteenth would have "accessibility to the best investment opportunities."

No mention is made by that group of the fact that the settlement was made in recognition of proprietary rights of Alaska Natives and does not establish the intent of Congress to diminish existing federal services. Nor does the group make note of the financial and resource development opportunities available to the land-based Alaska corporations.

AFNI's slick salesmanship produces a smooth-surfaced, but hollow-bodied, appeal for the creation of the thirteenth corporation. It is cheap junk mail, and I would expect a better presentation in a record club offer. Argument over such a serious matter as the rights of Alaska Natives living outside the

state deserves a much better brand of discourse.

As evidenced in this column, I am angered by this shoddy attempt to divide and dissassociate the Alaska Native populace from their birthright.

Alaska Natives residing outside of the state deserve consideration in post-settlement structures equal to that afforded their relatives in Alaska. The advantages and disadvantages of the thirteenth corporation should be made fully known to them. Aspiring executives seeking a financial empire should have no place in this educational process.

And Alaska Federation of Natives International had the audacity to sign their form letter as "The Board of Directors, AFNI Incorporated." It seems to me that the genuine and legitimate organization called AFNI, Inc. will have strong grounds to complain about that false usage of their name.

Another comment I have about receiving the e-flyers from AFNI and the Seattle-First National Bank is the manner in which they were able to obtain my address. I don't mind that the Enrollment Office provides a list of applicants to legitimate Alaska Native corporations and organizations. I do resent such access having been provided to AFNI and the Seattle-First National Bank. One wonders what kind of junk mail I might receive next.