

EDUCATION MEETING HISTORIC

'Entered a New Era' Says Pollock of Sitka Education Conference

Congressman Howard W. Pollock has seen the education conference in Sitka last week as historic.

"... And I feel we have entered a new era in the relationship between the entire native community of Alaska on the one hand and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the State Commissioner of Education, the state legislators

and the congressional delegation on the other," declared Pollock.

The above statement was contained in a long handwritten letter to Ellen and Roger Lang of Sitka, officials of the Alaska

Native Brotherhood camp in that city and who are, and have been, prominent spokesmen on native education in their camp.

Pollock said that Mr. and Mrs. Lang might have been disappointed that the decision of the executive session was not to spend the entire \$9.6 million in the Sitka area and more specifically in upgrading the facilities at Mt. Edgecumbe.

"However," Pollock continued, "the very difficult decision evolved from a combination of considerations in the executive session:

"a) The necessity to move the regional high school program beyond the talking stage and into reality;

"b) The diverse interests of the native leaders from different geographic areas, each desiring expenditure of part of the money to meet the secondary education needs of his own district;

"c) The fact that the expenditure of \$6 million to make repairs and upgrading of Mt. Edgecumbe, or a maximum expenditure of \$19 million for the

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Historic Meeting . . .

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total upgrading and replacement program, is actually expending very large sums for perpetuation of segregated BIA education in Alaska, and a program that at best can be considered temporary if the regional high school concept is to become an actuality;

"d) The realization that of the approximately 650 students of Mt. Edgecumbe, most are from outside of Southeastern and thus for all practical purposes just as far away from home as if they were at Chemawa or Chilocco (although they are in Alaska, of course);

"e) The fact that there are only 250 native children in all of Southeastern Alaska requiring secondary education who are not in an organized school district, and thus arrangements must be made to provide for the schooling, whether they are educated in or out of Alaska;

"Whereas, there are 943 such students in the area surrounding Bethel, 932 in the area surrounding Nome, 743 in the area surrounding Fairbanks, 507 in the area surrounding Anchorage, and 184 in the area surrounding Kodiak."

Pollock said that accordingly, the only means to ultimately phase out Chemawa and Chilocco schooling of Alaskan natives and to deep Alaskan native children closer to home is to begin now to build the regional capacity to handle children locally.

"I believe," Howard Pollock projected, "we can ultimately develop Mt. Edgecumbe into a major vocational educational facility—but, of course, we cannot do all things at once.

"Meanwhile, if we can allow the facilities to continue in operation for the next few years on the present basis, as we begin the phase-out of our Chemawa and Chilocco programs, and establish Sitka as the regional high school center for Southeastern Alaska, it seems we will have made the best statewide decision to accomodate the greatest number of native students."

Here, Pollock pointed out the projected allocation decisions of the executive session in Sitka and how much money each community or area would receive of the \$9.6 million:

—\$4 million, 200 students in Sitka.

—\$4 million, 200 students in Bethel.

—\$1 million, 200 students in Fairbanks.

—\$300,000, 200 students at Kotzebue and Barrow.

—\$200,000 for study of the regional high school concept.

The projection would provide for 800 students.

In addition to the above projection, Pollock said, a resolution was adopted to have the Alaska State Housing Authority investigate the possibility of purchasing the old Providence Hospital to use as a boarding facility for native students in Anchorage under the regional high school concept.

Another resolution was adopted asking for a meeting of the native leaders with BIA officials and the commissioner and State Board of Education.

"I urged that henceforth," the Congressman continued, "there be at least an annual meeting of the sort just concluded with native leaders, BIA officials, state legislators and the congressional delegation in attendance, with education as the top priority for discussion."

Pollock pointed out that BIA deputy commissioner Ted Taylor agreed on behalf of the BIA that there will be no upgrading of Chemawa or Chilocco in preference to Mt. Edgecumbe in the future, and that Mt. Edgecumbe will, hopefully, continue without major repairs until students attending Chemawa and Chilocco are returned or are phased into the Alaska education system.

The Sitka education conference was heavily attended by native leaders from all areas, government officials, both state and federal.

Fairbanks delegation reportedly presented a well defined concept which the members of the Fairbanks Native Association prepared before the Sitka conference.

The Fairbanks presentation was delivered by Mrs. Mary Jane Fate and which impressed the conferees.

As a result of this, a high priority was placed on the building of a 200-student capacity dormitory to be built in Fairbanks.

Marcelo Quinto, who represented Tundra Times and acting as well as a delegate for FNA, said that the people of Sitka, ANB camp, went all out welcoming the conferees.

Quinto said that the ANB Sitka members led by Mrs. Ellen Lang put on a feast for the delegates and served Alaska Salmon, Alaska deer, and Alaska shee fish from Kotzebue.

"I never did find out who brought the shee fish, said Quinto.