

BIA Charged of Giving Hydaburg 'Run Around'

Klawock and Hydaburg cannery officials met in Seattle last month with representatives of the BIA to discuss operation of the Hydaburg cannery this year.

Bureau of Indian Affairs officials would give no indication of what their decision on the operation of the cannery would be.

The bureau, which has gained control of both canneries through loan agreements, has ordered the Hydaburg cannery closed for the last two years. Economic reasons have been advanced as arguments for the closure.

In the same two years, the older cannery at Klawock has been operated with the sanction of the BIA.

Richard Whittaker, former district attorney for Ketchikan, recently criticized the BIA stand.

"It seems, from the news reported in these pages last week, the Bureau of Indian Affairs is still giving the people of Hydaburg the run-around," Whittaker said.

"It is hard to understand a policy which announces it is to help people but which in effect is setting the people of two communities against each other. From the way the BIA has dealt with the operation of the canneries at Hydaburg and Klawock, it is a wonder that the people from each city still speak to each other."

The attorney went on to suggest the Hydaburg cannery be divorced from BIA control and that private industry be invited to investigate its operation.

Prior to 1963, whenever it was economically necessary to close one cannery, the canneries alternated years of operation.

Now, the Klawock cannery has operated for three years and the Hydaburg cannery has been ordered to stand idle.

Cannery officials have questioned the legality, practicality, and morality of the BIA stand.

Hydaburg Cannery Council official Fred Grant, Jr. said last week, "I think we're gaining ground, at least we're being heard in our capacity as directors. But how much influence we'll have—how much recognition we'll receive—I do not yet know."

Grant objected most strenuously to the methods used by the BIA when it threatened default action on the cannery two years ago.

Grant said the cannery manager had been secretly relieved of his duties by the BIA before the loan payment came due.

The payment has not been made, Grant said. There has

been no information from the BIA on what effect the payment has on the default action.

On Nov. 2 of last year, the Hydaburg Cannery Council passed a resolution asking the BIA to grant them more independence in the operation of their cannery.

In the two months since that resolution has been passed, the BIA has not responded nor has it indicated what its reaction to the request is.

Grant said, "I don't think our request or our attitude is arbitrary. We're trying to gear our business to successful business operations."

"If it is necessary to combine operations with Klawock, the sensible thing to do would be to set up a reciprocal agreement to guarantee Hydaburg cannery operation at least every other year."

Klawock cannery officials made a general request at the Seattle meeting that all canneries be allowed to operate, Grant said. Klawock also suggested combined operations when the market is bad or during poor fishing years.

Attending the meeting from Hydaburg were Bob Sanderson, Sylvester Peele, Ed Sanderson and Fred Grant Jr.

There were two meetings, each lasting six hours.

Hydaburg cannery officials are anxiously awaiting word from the BIA. —