

AAIA Joins Group to Stop Amchitka Blast

WASHINGTON, D. C.—(AP)—A lawsuit to stop an underground nuclear explosion on the Alaskan island of Amchitka this October will have a formal response from the U.S. government by July 28.

The Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA), an organization of 50,000 Indian and non-Indian members which is devoted to protect the rights and welfare of Indians and Alaska Natives, has joined seven other national conservation and antiwar groups to block the largest underground atomic explosion ever set off by the

United States.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court here July 8, requested an injunction to stop the Atomic Energy Commission from testing the five-megaton Cannikin ABM warhead.

It was the first time a nuclear test related to the development of weaponry had been challenged in court.

AAIA General Counsel Arthur Lazarus indicated that the Aleuts had taken a position in opposition to the testing project last May in testimony and resolution.

"There are environmental considerations of great moments," said Lazarus. "First is the possibility of 'venting'—radioactivity escaping directly into the atmosphere. Secondly, earthquakes might be triggered by the blast, touching off a submarine tidal wave. Thirdly, and of the greatest possible danger, in due course the radioactivity could get into the ocean and affect the salmon.

"Experts say salmon would not be affected for perhaps 150 years," said Lazarus. "That may be long in the life of one man, but short in the life of the world."

The suit claims the AEC is in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and may violate the Limited Test Ban Treaty of 1963 if radioactivity escapes into the atmosphere and extends into Canada and the Soviet Union.