

Fink says he's mis-understood

By BILL HESS

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Tom Fink enthusiastically supports the initiative which would put an end to Alaska's subsistence laws, but claims that rural and Native Alaskans misunderstand his position on hunting and fishing. "Anybody who needs fish and game to keep body and soul together will have it," Fink, the Republican gubernatorial candidate,

stated at a press conference in Anchorage last week.

By anybody, Fink made it clear that he meant someone living in downtown Anchorage as well as the Alaskan Bush. Culture and tradition, said Fink, should play no part in determining who has first access to game and fish. Fink also stated that he did not like the word, "subsistence," but instead preferred the term

"personal use requirements."

Fink stressed his belief that anyone needing this preference should get it. A person who lives in Anchorage and who has no money, needs game and fish more than does someone who lives in the Bush but has money, said Fink.

"Certainly a guy who makes \$70,000 a year will not get any preference from me!" Fink

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Fink indicates he has secret Native support

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stressed.

When Fink spoke of giving preference to someone whose needs for wildlife were greater than others, it sounded as if he were still talking about having some type of subsistence law, but he disagreed. "Let me remind you that we never had a subsistence law until 1978! We never had a federal law until 1980!" Yet, said Fink, people who needed fish and game got it.

He argued that sound game management will result in resources going to the people who need it most. Should moose populations dwindle in a certain area, Fink noted, fly-in hunting could be banned. This would give the local people an advantage in taking the available moose, he said.

He did not say what mechanisms could be used to give a person with little money preference over his \$70,000-a-year example.

Fink told newspaper and TV reporters gathered at the conference that right now, people in rural areas get first crack at fish and game resources because of the subsistence law, and that what is left is divided among everybody else.

He disagreed with the argument that the priority has never yet been applied because

it takes place only during a shortage of a certain game or fish resource.

Wildlife management is a process of regulating a constant scarcity, Fink argued, and therefore as long as the subsistence law is in effect, there is a continual priority for rural people with a tradition of hunting and fishing.

Appearing with Fink was Mike Colletta, his running mate. During his primary campaign for Lt. Governor, Colletta voiced his support of the subsistence priority.

Colletta stated that despite being teamed up with Fink, he still opposed the initiative, but stressed that his goal with game and fish management is the same as Fink's: to give all Alaskans equal rights to fish and game, sportsmen as well as subsistence users. Colletta believes the best way to do that is by amending the current law, rather than repealing it.

Native Alaskans appear to be unified in their opposition to Fink's candidacy, yet Fink told reports that he anticipated a good working relationship with Native leaders should he win.

"My observation with Native leaders is that I am in very good shape. A good number of them agree privately with my philosophy. They say they

want to support me — I suspect they did support me in the primary." He would not name any such people.

In reality, a number of leaders came out with a statement of support for Terry Miller, Fink's opponent, during the primary, but none for Fink.

Yet Fink argued that in 1991 shareholders in the Native corporations will be able to sell their shares — and therefore their lands. If their corporations are not making money and paying good dividends, said Fink, then many shareholders may be tempted to go

ahead and sell out to large, non-Native corporations. The Native corporations also will be subject to taxes.

"Most Native leaders want to produce money out of their corporations, they want to give their shareholders substantial dividends. Many feel I will do more to help them get this done," Fink named building docks, roads, hydroelectric dams and not raising taxes as some of the things he would do which he believed would be appealing to Native people.

Fink also restated his support of moving the capital to Willow, but stressed that

was but the voters' decision to make — not his. Fink favors investing the permanent fund in Alaska rather than Outside. He would rather see permanent fund money earn 8 percent on home loans to Alaskans than 13 percent on the New York Stock Exchange, he said.

Fink supports Susitna Dam, limits on government spending, and believes large projects such as the Anchorage-Fairbanks Intertie should be worked on with what money is available each year. Prudhoe Bay is just the beginning, Fink argued. Alaska's wealth is going to grow and grow and grow.