

TCC Discusses Indian Prog.'s Management

By JEFF RICHARDSON

The thorny question of which Native organization will manage federal Indian programs in Interior Alaska was discussed at a hearing in Fairbanks March 19.

The hearing was held to explain to interested parties the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, signed by President Ford in January. The meeting, one of many held throughout the nation, was also held to gather comments on how the act should be implemented by federal regulations.

The meeting was attended by representatives from the Tanana Chiefs Conference, Association of Interior Eskimos, Fairbanks Native Association, City of BarroDINYE A-Stevens Corp., and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The act gives Native groups the right to plan and operate programs for themselves under contact with the government. It also makes this more practical through waivers of federal contracting regulations, planning

(Continued on Page 6)



DELEGATES LISTEN — Stockholders of the Tanana Chiefs Conference gathered enmass last week and listened intently as guest speakers delivered their oratory.

Programs Discussed...

(Continued from Page 1)

grants, and special personnel provisions.

At the outset, spokesman for the Tanana Chiefs and Interior Eskimos were critical of the way the act defines "tribe" and "tribal organization". They said the language was vague and confusing.

Both groups have expressed an interest in managing Native programs now administered by the BIA and the Indian Health Service. The Association of Interior Eskimos has voiced the fear that they will not receive equal treatment if only the Tanana Chiefs Conference is allowed to manage the services.

Claude Demientieff, director of the Tanana Chiefs Health Authority, said his group is mandated by its charter to provide equal treatment to people in its area. He added that he would discipline or release anyone in his employ found discriminating against eligible clients.

Although it has been suggested that more than one contract be let to service different groups of people, Ralph Reeser, legislative specialist for the BIA in Washington, said dual contracting would be more costly and that funding for the Indian

Self-Determination Act is an unknown factor at this time.

Reeser added that the regulations written to implement the act could establish a grievance process for people who feel they are being discriminated against.

As the act is written, there is no provision for choosing between two groups who claim overlapping responsibilities. Presumably the regulations could provide such a mechanism.

A schedule prepared by the BIA suggests the process of writing regulations will not be completed until next fall. Reeser ruled out the possibility of awarding the contracts under this particular bill until that time.

However, it is possible that BIA could award the contracts under old legislation, particularly the Buy Indian Act of 1910. Reeser said although Congress has suggested that BIA has used it too freely, it may still be implemented in some cases.

The Area Director of the BIA in Juneau, Clay Antioquia, was reportedly going to decide whether to accept a long-standing Tanana Chiefs proposal for contracting BIA services under existing authority. To date, no decision has been made.

Reeser said the Indian Self-Determination Act is not intended to replace old legislation, but supplement it. Under the act, the historic trust responsibility of the federal government to Native people would be maintained.

The meeting was held at the Chena View Hotel.