

KTUU wins round two in TV news fight

By BILL HESS

Tundra Times

Despite an Alaska Federation of Natives resolution and a Sealaska lobbying effort, Southeastern news watchers will be able to watch KIMO's statewide news program only by staying up till 1 a.m. or catching it the next morning at 11 a.m.

That decision was made last week at a meeting of the Rural Alaska Television Network (RAINET) in Anchorage. KIMO, which had prime-time exposure for its statewide program until the RAINET committee bumped it from its 5:30 Alaska Standard Time time slot to 11 p.m. last fall, had hoped to be rescheduled to 6:30 p.m.

The action last fall was taken to allow KTUU (Channel 2) a 120-day trial period to broadcast its news in the 5:30 p.m. time slot, to allow rural viewers to compare news programs and to decide which they preferred.

(Cont. on Page Twenty-Four)

RATNet votes to continue KTUU News trial period

(Continued from Page One)

At the time that KTUU won the 120-day trial period station News Director Victor Jorge told RATNet board members that his station was planning to open a Fairbanks bureau and have many in-village reports.

KIMO has no Fairbanks bureau and frequently presents the results of a KIMO phone call into a village.

Ross Soboleff, public affairs director for Sealaska, requested that the 14-member board honor KIMO's request to be broadcast at 6:30 p.m. That would allow Southeastern viewers the chance to view the statewide news program at 8:30 p.m., because Juneau time is two hours ahead of Anchorage.

Soboleff told committee members that Sealaska is sponsoring KIMO's news at \$25,000 annually, and putting an additional \$25,000 into yearly advertising. With the 11 p.m. news not showing in Southeast until 1 a.m., most of Sealaska's shareholders would not even be able to see the news sponsored by their corporation.

"Rural Alaskans have a large

appetite for news," Soboleff told the committee, "particularly news from rural Alaska."

Concern was voiced that if KIMO were moved into the prime time slot, and KTUU was left at 5:30 p.m. and national news at 6 p.m., Aviation Weather would have to be moved or canceled. The Learn Alaska Network also carries Aviation Weather, but several villages which do not receive Learn Alaska would lose the weather report if it was moved.

Carl Heyano, a Bristol Bay representative from Dillingham, also objected. His community, Heyano said, and many others receive only one station. "For one channel, we are really getting blitzed with news," Heyano charged, saying that by placing KIMO into a prime-time slot, the children of the villages would be robbed of a half-hour of programming time before their bedtimes rolled around.

Heyano also contended that one news program is basically the same as another, and that viewers limited to one channel would just see a repeat on KIMO of what they had al-

ready viewed on KTUU.

Janie Leask of AFN presented a resolution passed by AFN at its annual conference last month, calling on RATNet to run the two programs back-to-back to allow villagers to truly compare them.

At that convention, delegates voted down a second resolution which would have supported totally replacing the KTUU report with the KIMO newscast. That resolution, if accepted and followed

by RATNet would have cancelled the 120-day trial period.

A RATNet representative argued that KTUU deserved a chance to demonstrate its newscast to village representatives.

Myron Igitanloc, a Southeastern representative, presented a motion that the AFN time slot change resolution be accepted. After a short recess, the motion was withdrawn and the committee went into a "work session," where it was finally

decided to keep things basically as they were, at least for the 120-day trial period promised to KTUU. The only difference is that KIMO's 11 p.m. news would be rebroadcast the following morning at 9 a.m. Alaska Standard Time, in place of Good Morning Alaska.

Soboleff was unsatisfied. "There will be few viewers at that time," he commented. "No one is interested in yesterday's news."