

Emil Notti's Leadership Defended by Rev. Kompkoff

The motives of Emil Notti in mentioning the creation of a separate nation for Natives should not be questioned, according to Rev. Nicholas Kompkoff, priest of the St. Innocent Russian Orthodox Church in Anchorage.

Furthermore, he claimed that the Russian Orthodox Church had no connection to a letter published in the Tundra Times which did this.

The letter referred to was published Feb. 27 under the name of Elias J. Armistead, who identified himself as a priest with the Russian Orthodox Mission in McGrath, Alaska.

In his letter, Armistead said that the native people have a right to know where Notti is leading them and what he stands

for.

He called upon the head of the Alaska Federation of Natives to explain to the natives whether he is trying to segregate them or integrate them into the American community.

In a speech several months ago in Washington State, Notti said he would advocate the creation of a separate Indian nation in Western Alaska if Congress does not pass a fair land claims bill.

Mr. Armistead, Rev. Kompkoff wrote, is not recognized as a priest of the Russian Orthodox missionary in Alaska.

And what he says, the priest continued, does not reflect the views of the Orthodox Church of America or of the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Alaska.

The National Council of Churches, of which the Russian Orthodox Church is a member, has in fact endorsed the land claims proposal of the AFN.

"Mr. Emil Notti is an elected President of the AFN," Rev. Kompkoff wrote, "and his motives should not be questioned. As an elected officer his duties require him to act in the best interests of his people."

Rev. Kompkoff added that he thought a priest should be concerned with spiritual interests and leave secular problems to the elected officials.

"In conclusion, I would venture to say that knowing Mr. Emil Notti, he would not, I repeat, would not ask a Russian Orthodox Priest what he stands for or where he is leading his people."

An Aleut from Chenega and Tatitlek, the priest wrote that the land claims bill is the one main problem uniting all Alaskan Natives. "And I heartily disagree with Mr. Armistead if he thinks

that Mr. Notti is trying to segregate the Native people."

The Russian Orthodox diocese of Alaska currently has 15 priests to serve 85 Churches and Chapels scattered throughout the state.

In giving a brief history of the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska, Rev. Kompkoff wrote that over 175 years ago eight Monks from Valaam Monastery near Finland landed on Kodiak Island. They followed the Russian Fur traders and frontiersmen.

"And as all frontiersmen, the Russian variety mistreated the natives of the coastal communities."

These eight monks, he continued, defended the Natives and appealed to the Church officials in Russia and to the Fur Companies in Alaska for the interests and welfare of the Native people. By 1802 only one monk, Father Herman, was left in Alaska. He came to be known to the Aleuts on Kodiak Island as "Apa" meaning "Grand Father," and will be canonized as a saint in August, 1970 in a ceremony at Kodiak. Father Herman's dedication inspired other Russian Orthodox Missionaries to build churches in other places like Unalaska, Kenai and Sitka.

Sitka became the seat of the Church because the bulk of the population of Alaska was there, because it was, at that time, the capitol of Alaska and because the fur companies were headquartered there.

After the purchase of Alaska by the United States the Episcopal See was moved to San Francisco and later to New York where it is presently headed by His Eminence Metropolitan Ireney.