

# Prestigious Groups Adopt AFN Cause

By JOHN BORBRIDGE

In recent months a number of large, prestigious national organizations have adopted the cause of the Alaska Federation of Natives.

Labor unions, religious groups and civic institutions are forming a coalition of support in Washington, D.C. and are bringing the land settlement issue to their local chapters throughout the country.

The support of the national organizations for native Alaskans highlights the fact that the issue of an equitable settlement of the Alaska Native land claims is one affecting the conscience of the

entire nation.

One of the first institutions to take up the natives' cause was the National Council of Churches, as reported in earlier editions of the Tundra Times.

The NCC includes 33 denominations in its membership and represents 42 million people. On December 3rd of last year the General Assembly of the NCC adopted the following recommendations:

"Be it hereby resolved that the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches support the equitable and just settlement to be provided by aforementioned legislation, and urge its member communities and their members to make known this support to their Senators and Representatives in the U.S. Congress."

Since adopting the resolution, the NCC staff in Washington has indicated its support to the AFN's position to several senators on the Interior committee.

In addition, it has briefed other religious groups and civic institutions on the problem, urging them to support the native cause.

A Catholic organization in Chicago called the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice has also lent its support to the natives.

This Catholic conference is made up of 115 local chapters throughout the United States and has over 10,000 active members, who reach many times more than that through their proposals and programs.

In the January edition of its magazine *Commitment*, the Conference ran a feature article called "Crucial Legislation on Native Alaskan Problems," calling on its membership to work for a

just settlement of native claims.

The conference plans to keep its membership informed of developments in the Senate committee through newsletters, and stands ready to assist throughout the struggle for passage of the bill.

Another religious group, the American Quakers, Society of Friends, has made a substantial contribution to lobbying for the AFN bill.

Through the Friends committee on national legislation, one of the nation's most respected lobbyists whose purpose it is to "win the ascent of reasonable minds" for correct social and political action.

The Friends have visited the office of each senator on the Interior committee on behalf of the AFN's position.

Two national women's groups have taken an interest in the native Alaskan position. The General Federation of Women's Clubs is writing all 15,000 of its local chapters throughout the country, urging them to write their senators and congressmen in behalf of justice for the natives.

The League of Women Voters has urged its members to study the issue and has invited Mr. Ramsey Clark to address a breakfast meeting on the land settlement question during the national convention in May.

Other national organizations which have indicated support for the natives' position include the following: United Auto Workers, American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

While in Washington, D.C., AFN first vice president John Borbridge, Jr. has seen Senator Gravel. Senator Stevens and Congressman Pollock of the Alaska

Congressional delegation relative to the Alaska Native Land Claims. Visits were also made to the Republican Congressman of Iowa, and Congressman Ed Edmondson, Democrat of Oklahoma, in order to sense developments in the House. Discussions emanating from the House of Representatives indicate that while native land claims has been rated "priority" by Chairman Wayne Aspinall of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, no schedule for enactment of the bill has been proposed as of this date. However, sources in the House anticipate that less time would be required for the enactment of a claims bill.

Bill Byler, Executive Director of the Association on American Indian Affairs, and John Borbridge, Jr. appeared for 30 minutes on the Barry Gray talk show which reaches more than 2,000,000 listeners over WNCA in New York City. Mr. Borbridge and Mr. Byler accompanied Justice Goldberg in a visit to the publisher and editor-in-chief of Look Magazine regarding a possible article on the claims issue. CBS News, from New York City also contacted Borbridge concerning background news on the Alaska Federation of Natives and the native land claims.