

## ***Editorial Comment—***

# **Disturbing Dissensions**

We are getting a little uncomfortable sitting in our corner watching some of our Native entities becoming embroiled in some worrisome bickerings among their own groups. Some of these encounters are within regional corporations as well as other entities within common areas. They may have been well meant in the first blush but were they thoroughly thought out before they were kindled? Were possible alternatives that might work better considered? Were the protagonists of the questions posed aware that dissensions would weaken not only themselves as well as those that were being subjected?

One thing we are sure of — continuing misgivings and doubts will eat into the fibers of strength of the entities involved. Weaker efforts will result and doubts against the protagonists, as well as the antagonists will grow and something significant will have to be done so whatever recognized wrongs can be set right. Otherwise, continuing battles will weaken both sides and distrust will set in among their own people.

The above statement is not a good thing to write about because our Native people at the present time are heavily involved in the implementation of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. This is a huge undertaking and its implementation in a proper manner is of utmost importance if our people at the present time and those in the future are to benefit to the best possible extent.

The Native leaders, surely, have recognized the gravity of tasks for their public — the Native people — for whose welfare they are now working. They are also aware, we're sure, that this public is like any other mass of people anywhere else and that it can be aroused if some efforts don't seem to bode well for that public. This is an eventuality that could be fearsome to meet. Its power cannot be doubted. Its size may be small as compared with other masses of people but its potential potency is not to be taken lightly.

There are other things that must be watched also. Some furtive eyes may be watching for openings to move in. The favorite or favorable situation these eyes are looking for, for one, is dissension. The picture is akin to "divide and conquer."

One thing that might be taken into account with more foresight, more than in the past and since the passage of the land claims act, is the services and aid of the statewide organization — the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. The AFN has proved to be a hard working entity and it certainly has Washington, D.C. and Congress within earshot. With the cooperation of all the regional areas, this group can be a great deal more effective and infinitely more useful for all concerned within Native regions. Instead of eyeing it with some suspicion, more positive approaches for cooperation should be made so many of the problems that have plagued some regional groups can be discussed more fully so the extent of understanding can be attained. AFN, Inc. can serve as a mediation force so that groups can serve along with the people involved and it is likely, cooperative efforts can bring about needed improvements in relations as well as helping to solve some bothersome problems.

— H.R.