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BIG OIL FIRMS, CHARTER SERVICE IN TIFF

By SUSAN TAYLOR
Staff Writer

The owner of a small charter service in Fairbanks feels that he is being pushed around by the big oil businesses and plans to

fight what he calls attempts to squeeze him out.

The controversy started several months ago when private aircraft owners and three charter companies—all renting parking

spaces at the Fairbanks International Airport—were notified that they would have to move to another area of the airport by the last of October. Their lots were to be used for cargo storage.

The airplane owners had been renting parking spaces on what is called the North End of the airport—or that portion closest to town bordering Airport Way.

According to Airport Manager

John Garland, the owners merely had parking permits that could be withdrawn within 10 days notice. Al Wright, who had paid his rent up to July 1, said that he

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Oil, Charter Tiff...

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had a lease and should not be made to move.

The notice went out the last of August, Garland said, and all of the owners moved their planes except for Wright.

Wright, who owns three planes, has said that he would be glad to move if the airport could provide a space with adequate facilities for him to operate his business.

The space made available for him and the other light aircraft owners is on what is called the East Side of the airport—the other side of the main runway from Airport Way.

Two charter companies and most of the private owners ordered to move have relocated there.

In the meantime, the airport has leased the two lots that Wright has been renting for five years to British Petroleum and the International Mud Corporation, which supplies oil industries with a material for the drilling rigs.

Both companies are storing cargo on the lots and Wright is in the middle of the two. Monday, Wright could not get his airplanes to the runway because one of the companies had parked a trailer in the way. Thus, he said, none of his three charter flights could not run and he lost quite a bit of money.

According to him, the company had been ordered by their Anchorage office to park the trailer so as to block his access way.

In an effort to prevent other such occurrences, Wright plans to file a petition for a restraining order in the Superior Court this week. His attorney, Warren Taylor, explained that after the petition is filed, the judge will call for a hearing on the matter.

If granted, he continued, the restraining order would be to prevent the companies from molesting Wright or "interfering in his use of the lots on which he has a valid lease."

Wright and about 15 other airplane owners wrote to Governor Keith Miller protesting the move from the North to the East side.

However, the letter was referred to the Commissioner of Public Works who replied to the airplane owners.

However, Wright felt that nothing was accomplished by this correspondence.

Wright has questioned the moving of British Petroleum and International Mud to an area that had long been used by light aircraft.

According to the airport manager, the small aircraft owners had long complained about their location because large planes taxiing down the runway next to them often threw oil and gravel onto their planes. Also, not long ago, the brakes of a heavy aircraft failed and it crashed into a light airplane parked nearby.

For these reasons, Garland continued, the State had approved plans to move all light aircraft to the other side of the runway where there is more room, freeing the space where they had been parking for cargo storage.

Thus, he continued, the airplanes were given notice to move.

Shortly thereafter, Garland added, British Petroleum and International Mud lost their short-term leases to store cargo

on the South end of the airport and needed a lot to move to. The lots to be vacated by the small aircraft had been slated for cargo storage use so the land was leased to them. They plan to construct a direct access way to the runway and load the cargo directly onto freight airplanes.

And, they do not want Al Wright and his airplanes in the middle of their cargo because such will shoot their insurance rates up.

And Wright does not want to move for several reasons.

First, his office and waiting room are directly across from his parking area on Airport Way on land owned by him.

If forced to move to the other side, he said there would be no place close by where his customers could wait to board the airplanes.

There is a road leading to lots on the other side, and he has agreed that his passengers could wait in his office and then ride to the other side.

But, he added, it is a four-mile drive one way from the office over an extremely rough road.

Garland admitted that the road is in poor condition and said that a request for money to pave the road has been submitted to the State legislature. He expects the money to be appropriated and the paving to be done this summer.

Secondly, Wright and the others who wrote Gov. Miller contended that the East side is hazardous for light aircraft operation because "it is not a stable dust free area."

The apron or parking area there expanded last summer, Garland said, and the expansion is not paved. Similarly, money for paving has been requested and the project should be carried out this spring, he added.

Thirdly, the aircraft owners have said that the area does not contain minimum facilities such as tie-downs, private gasoline supplies, and electricity.

According to the airport manager the tie-downs will be installed this summer when the parking area is paved.

One commercial fuel pit is on the East Side now and another will be installed. The owners, he said, can use this gasoline supply.

Or, if they lease one of the lots rather than merely renting a space in the parking area, they can install their own gasoline tanks and run electricity lines to their property off main lines already in the area.

Garland added that this is what two of the charter companies that had to move have done.

Wright stressed that the cost of doing such, plus the cost of preparing the lot so that it can be used would run into a lot of money, even though part of the money for developing the land would be refunded over a period of years by the airport.

Garland said this week that since no settlement could be reached at the Fairbanks level the issue has been placed, more or less, in the hands of the state and the Commissioner of Public Works is working on the problem.

Taylor, Wright's attorney, sees the situation as a "bald-faced robbery," and "flagrant abuse of a man's rights."