

Lack of Info from Leaders Deplored

May 2, 1968

Frederick Paul, Esq.
1310-1411 Fourth Avenue Bldg.
Seattle, Washington 98101

Dear Mr. Paul:

Your recent letter concerning the Alaska land problem is quite appropriate. To bring you up to date, I would like to share with you the following facts and impressions.

On April 15, at a special meeting of the Council on Indian Affairs in Chicago, a copy of your letter was circulated and discussed. While members of the Council and the Indian Rights Association share a common concern in regard to the land claim problems, we also have felt a gross lack of "feed back" from anyone in Alaska, either from the AFN, ANB, William Hensley or others, some of whom had assured me of forwarding information and materials concerning their plans of actions, the precise goals to be achieved, and their progress in achieving their goals.

Through your letters and through a reading of Tundra Times (usually 1-2 weeks late) I have managed to keep up with some issues. But as your excellent letter and an editorial in Tundra Times pointed out, information feed-back is very poor and communications may well spell success or failure.

We are aware of the great amount of work being done by William Hensley and others to hammer out a suitable state bill, HB 672. Your letter suggests that it has been passed, and we are now wanting answers to these questions from the Alaska Native leadership, accordingly. Do Alaska Native organizations:

- 1) accept the present state bill?
- 2) continue to support S 2906, and request its passage?
- 3) now wish to urge House hearings on the Alaska land claims issue?
- 4) now wish to request and embark upon a national publicity campaign toward achieving passage of S 2906?

We feel that it is important to know how successful local support has been to date, and whether a legal coalition has been formed. Are the several Alaska Native interests preparing or ready to do this in order to secure competent legal representation in Washington?

The feeling of the Council on Indian Affairs seemed to be that it should not act without specific request from Alaska Native leadership. Neither should it attempt to wage a battle alone and for Indians but only on the basis of a willing partnership. We trust that this may yet come because there is considerable good will, concern, and effort ready to be exerted when we feel that Alaska Native leadership is ready for us to go ahead.

I have been trying to reach William Hensley by phone for a number of days without success. In my most recent attempt, I was informed that telephone communication with Kotzebue was cut off. I will keep trying, since the Council would hope either for his presence in Washington on May 13 or 14, or a clear, up to date report with recommendations for action. If another Native leader would be in the Washington area at that time, that would be fine.

Also, I have talked with the National Congress of American Indians in Washington, D. C., and they feel also that the greatest problem in knowing what to do is the failure of Alaska Native leadership to be more specific and to communicate.

Perhaps we are too anxious. Perhaps the time has not yet arrived for us to act. Or, perhaps the time is fast approaching and we shall soon hear. It is my hope to get a response on these questions no later than May 10, 1968, for presentation to the Council on Indian Affairs on May 13 and 14.

Thank you for your letter of April 26. It was here when I returned from Washington, D. C. on April 30. I shall look forward to further contact with you.

Sincerely yours,
Armin L. Saeger, Jr.
Executive Director

ALS, Jr./gms
cc. Alaska Federation of Natives
Alaska Native Brotherhood
William Hensley
John Borbridge

(Editor's Note: Home office of the Indian Rights Association is: 1505 Race Street, Philadelphia, Penn. 19122, Phone: (918) LO 3-8349. Field Office: P.O. Box 808, Tahlequah, Oklahoma 74464, Phone: (918) 456-6371.)