



REGIONAL LEADER—Focused against the map of Alaska, ASNA President Joseph Upicksoun explained the actions of his region last week to questioners from the floor of the AFN convention.

AFN Convention . . .

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"The President has given us a verbal commitment not to sign the final bill till it is approved by the Alaska Federation of Natives," Wright told the convention.

In a month, or six weeks, or however long it takes, they will reconvene in Anchorage for a final decision.

The mandate to support Wright, and to reaffirm the AFN position on a 60 million acre 500 million dollar land settlement, came after a tumultuous final session just a few hours after the credentials committee certified the authority of the convention to open formal proceedings.

For two and a half days more than 200 village delegates had listened to panels, votes to support from Alaska's Governor, Congressman and Democratic Senator and seemingly endless repetitions of exhortations to organize, plan and train their people.

As the convention drew to a close, village delegates appeared alarmed that they might not be able to have their say before land claims were settled—forever. After all, their leaders had told them this was their last chance for input before the bill went before Congress.

In the midst of an excited session with attacks upon the President, the board and Congress, AFN President Don Wright took a vote to recess and left the room.

In the confusion that followed, vice president Phillip Guy took the podium and called to order what has been termed a "rump session." About 90 per cent of the village delegates present voted to call the session into order and voiced their fears.

Then, as tempers lowered and a resolution quickly passed supporting Wright and the AFN bill, the problem became how to get Don Wright to return to the podium. The dilemma was solved in half an hour by excluding the press and all non-natives and reconvening as an executive session of the AFN Board—with more than 200 native onlookers.

Two brief resolutions passed before the convention recessed till its next meeting in Anchorage. The AFN voted to support the Alaska State Human Rights Commission's Alaska Plan and to approve the \$330,000 AFN budget for the next fiscal year.

The AFN agreed to pay for a delegate from each village to attend the convention session in Anchorage.

Many village delegates are just beginning to realize what they will lose under the land claims bills, said ASNA President Joe Upicksoun on Monday.

"They all want to say, this is my land, I want it," Upicksoun said. "But the Convention was not structured to let them say it."

AFN President Don Wright repeatedly came out during the

weekend in support of the ASNA's right to file its suit against the Interior Department contesting tentative approval of state lands.

"The intervention of the ASNA is clearly a solid lawsuit based on aboriginal title. Its effect is being heard around the world."

At Saturday's session Alaska's two Democrats in Congress pledged to support whatever position the AFN takes.

"Whatever you decide I would not only carry, I would be happy and honored to carry," Alaska Senator Mike Gravel told the convention.

Congressman Nick Begich feared, however, that the AFN might withdraw its support from a land claims bill in the House at the last minute to see if delay might bring a great settlement. He told the AFN that he must have a commitment from the AFN not to block the bill on the House floor if the bill is to be acted upon this session.

"Whatever your decision is, I'll abide by it. But I can assure you that no bill could ever come out of that committee (the House Rules Committee) unless I made that commitment," Begich said.

John Borbridge, Tlingit-Haida Central Council President had reminded the group that last year there was no House bill, and a Senate bill providing only 10 million acres.

"We are on the verge of victory, but we must be aware of legislative devices that will be offered to protect us from ourselves. We are all for one. As long as we are together, don't forget to say Native land rights—not claims," said Borbridge.

As the House and Senate bills draw close—the debate intensifies. Both Begich and Gravel predicted action within a month. The AFN plan appears to be to concentrate their effort on the conference committee—where Alaska's legislators will be less of a tiny minority. Then, their last recourse will be appeal to President Nixon.

"Whatever you think of the pending settlement, you'd better look upon it as forever," Tlingit Jim Thomas had reminded the Convention on Friday.

"For once the Congress acts, bless your advisors, it will take a miracle to undo what Congress will accomplish this year."

"Alaska natives, with their expertise, consider themselves 'too good' to look upon this coming settlement as a treaty—because it would make them too much like the Indians."

"This is a most important convention," Thomas emphasized. "You have grave decisions to make for now, at last you must show what you are made of and you must stand ready to accept the responsibility of what your future people shall have and enjoy and what they shall not have and for which they shall curse you."

North Slope Eskimos Sue . . .

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the plaintiffs have never ceded any part of their land by treaty or otherwise."

The complaint summarized the process through which selections were made of the Arctic Slope lands, approval by the Interior Secretary of those selections, and the sale of over 900 million dollars in leases by the state.

The Interior Secretary's action, argued ASNA, was in violation of "his legal duty as trustee and guardian for the plaintiffs."

They argued further that the land selected violated Section 6 of the Alaska Statehood Act because it was occupied, appropriated, reserved and used by the Arctic Slope Natives.

ASNA also stated that the Secretary acted in violation of the "disclaimer" clause of the Statehood Act, in which the state disclaims interest in land held by Alaska Natives.

Due process of law guaranteed in the Fifth Amendment was also violated, ASNA said, because the Arctic Slope Eskimos were not given adequate notice of the selection and subsequent granting of tentative approval.

"Finally, all leases, sales, conditional leases and conditional sales made under the authority of such tentative approvals are invalid and in violation of Section 6 of the Alaska Statehood Act for the land leased or sold was not 'vacant, unappropriated, or unreserved' as required by that section," the complaint argues.

In addition to Secretary Morton, the complaint named BIA Commissioner Louis R. Bruce, Assistant Secretary for Public Land Management Harrison Boesch, and Bureau of Land Management Director Burton Silcock as defendants.

Bruce was named, according to ASNA counsel Fred Paul, "in order to emphasize the trust responsibility of the United States." Bruce can also put input into the management of the case from the defendant's standpoint, he added.

Paul placed much of the blame for non-protection of Arctic Slope Eskimo rights on a conflict within the Interior Department. Protection of Indian rights conflicts with the administration of public lands because of over-emphasis of the BLM role, he said.

While testimony from the Eskimo plaintiffs will be valuable, Paul noted, the ASNA suit will be won or lost on the testimony of anthropologists," stated Paul.

According to Paul, no date for a hearing on the case can be set until a response is received from the defendants. A maximum of 40 days is allowed the defendants to respond through the Justice Department.

Response from the AFN to the ASNA action has been favorable. AFN president Don Wright stated that the action is a "solid lawsuit" whose effect is "being heard throughout the world."

The suit, on the verge of being filed for the past six years, is believed to indicate the dissatisfaction of the Arctic Slope with the land claims bill expected to be passed by the Congress.

Prior to filing the complaint in Washington, ASNA Executive Director Charles Edwardson, Jr., told the Tundra Times that he wished to commend the House Interior Committee members for their claims proposal.

While commending the "friend of the Alaska Natives on the House side," Edwardson condemned Alaska Senators Ted Stevens and Mike Gravel, who

are "not the friends of the Alaska Natives."

Should Stevens and Gravel choose to be friends of the Alaska Natives, Edwardson stated, they shall "run jointly with a non-discriminatory attitude."

Edwardson attacked the pair for "allowing" the village of Nooikoot to be deleted from the list of villages eligible to participate in the settlement under the Senate Interior Committee proposal.

"Eskimos have died there and rested in peace. There are not 25 people there, but their graves number over 25," he said.

Edwardson also expressed dis-

satisfaction with Senator Stevens for a "blackmail" amendment to the Senate bill which would prevent Natives with pending allotments from sharing in the economic provisions of the bill, and for failing to treat all Alaska reservations the same under the proposed legislation.

Edwardson had praise for Alaska Congressman Nick Begich, to whom he shouted demands in Washington last spring. "Congressman Begich has masterfully and beautifully executed his responsibility to those among the Alaska Native people who voted for him."

'Rock' Festival . . .

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for whom AFN president Don Wright gave up any speech time, was a performance by Sioux singers Floyd Westernman. Westernman is a nationally known author and singer of Indian protest songs including the well known "Custer Died For Your Sins."

He dedicated his famous song "In Our World Without Tomorrow," to Howard Rock and to the Alaska Federation of Natives.

"In Alaska, I sincerely feel, we are learning to live as one people in fulfillment of the ideals on which America was founded," Alaska Governor William Egan keyed the banquet.

The Governor called the banquet, which has become an Alaskan tradition "one of the most eagerly awaited annual events in the state."

"While the land claims are progressing towards a settlement in Congress, there are various areas of consideration ahead toward which we can already be directing our energies," said the Governor.

"In this regard, the theme for tonight's banquet—the theme 'Children: Our Innocent Heirs'—sums up very completely what is at stake."

Through cooperation now among all Alaskans, our children and grandchildren can inherit the kind of state which we are all dedicated to building—a society of people who genuinely care about each other as brothers and sisters and cherished human beings."

At this annual occasion to raise money to continue publishing the TUNDRA TIMES, many Alaskans paid tribute to Howard Rock, the Eskimo editor who has shepherded this native weekly through close to a decade of publication.

Congressman Nick Begich tributed the editor for his following of the best publishing traditions and his lack of "edi-

torializing on the front page."

Though the banquet turned out a success, by last week it seemed as though a million problems had arisen. With the convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives in town, the banquet quickly oversold and many village delegates were unable to obtain tickets. For days, the TUNDRA TIMES board pondered solutions to the problem.

Then, as the phones rang constantly Friday afternoon there was a desperate call. Jo Putnam was at the airport with 140 pounds of berries and reindeer. How was she supposed to get it to town? There was massive panic as the office realized Tommy Richards, Jr. had left an hour before to pick her up. Finally, she found him.

As the speeches rang to a close at the banquet, Jeanie Dixon offered eight dozen long stemmed yellow roses an admirer had given to her to be auctioned off to benefit Tundra Times.

Famous auctioneer Jimmy Bedford took the podium and the roses went furiously—for \$10, \$20, \$35 and a giant \$100 Fairbanks sauna owner Joe Shockey had bought the whole bunch as a present for his wife—Rose.

In a burst of enthusiasm, Laura Bergt took off her qiviut vest and offered it to the auctioneer. Mike Musick ended up with the hand made top of her famous qiviut hot pants ensemble for the grand sum of \$75. The borealis blue vest and hot pants has been worn on nationwide T.V. by Laura.

All in all, it was an exciting evening—one seen only once a year. Tundra Times secretary Diana Cartier threatens a nervous breakdown. Howard Rock is taking a two week vacation and all may survive—until next year's Tundra Times banquet in Anchorage.

Satellite Saves Lives . . .

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Space Administration at Rosman asking that the satellite continue functioning until the crisis had passed. NASA, which operates the satellites, agreed.

A short time later, the second emergency involving the woman with appendicitis at Anaktuvuk Pass was transmitted on the system, along with reports of heavy ground fog and falling snow. Unable to send bush planes into the villages to evacuate the two patients to a hospital, the doctor in Tanana continued giving instructions to both villages through the night.

The following morning, planes were sent in and the patients evacuated.

Commenting in Washington, Senator Mike Gravel said, "I am grateful for the teamwork between Alaskans, NASA, and

other—officials for the effort which so dramatically saved two lives."

"I am proud of my fellow Alaskans who responded once again to the code of the North, but this time utilizing modern communications satellites."

"When I first proposed this system a year ago," Gravel continued, "no one could clearly visualize the type of emergency which occurs regularly and which would go unmet were it not for this system of communication."

This experience of just this one evening demonstrates the clear need for this system and its further expansion. In one night, it has provided its worth and justified the costs in time, money and skills which went into it.