

'We have waited far too long'

ICC supports Arctic nuclear free-zone resolution

by Dalee Sambo

Inuit Circumpolar Conference

In 1977, upon the founding of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the General Assembly delegates of this organization drafted and adopted Resolution 77-11: Peaceful and safe uses of the Arctic.

This resolution requests:

- The Arctic be used for peaceful and environmentally safe purposes only.

- There shall be prohibited any measures of a military nature, which includes specifically the establishment of military bases, carrying out of military maneuvers and the testing of any weapons.

- A complete moratorium on the placement of nuclear weapons in the Arctic regions.

At the 1983 General Assembly, held in Frobisher Bay in Canada, Resolution 83-01 was adopted. This resolution re-states our concerns and our op-

position to the use of the Arctic region for potentially hazardous experimentation with nuclear weapons and energy.

In Greenland, the Greenland Home-rule Government, which is dominated by Inuit, has adopted an Arctic nuclear free-zone resolution for the entire country.

Likewise in Canada, the Inuit of the Northwest Territories are undertaking a concerted lobbying effort to pass a similar resolution.

At the 1986 ICC General Assembly, held in Kotzebue, the delegates adopted a resolution supporting the Saami peoples of Northern Scandinavia, recognizing that the Chernobyl nuclear disaster is among the greatest of human misfortunes.

We also adopted a resolution on nuclear pollution. Again, we called for continued support for global nuclear disarmament — Resolution 86-29.

The ICC has been working

cooperatively with Citizens Against Nuclear War to gain the necessary support for the passage of House Joint Resolution 4. We would like to show the important differences between HJR4 and a new bill, Senate Joint Resolution 22.

- HJR4 has the support of SANE/ALASKA, the Alaska League of Women Voters, the ICC and the Alaska Environmental Lobby.

- Hundreds of letters, public opinion messages and phone calls have been received by state legislators in support of HJR4. Few, if any, have been received for SJR22.

- More than 3,400 petition signatures have been sent to legislators on behalf of a nuclear free Arctic and sub-Arctic resolution. These petitions came from 28 rural villages and several urban areas.

- No petitions support SJR22.

- SJR22 does not mention the devastating impact of the Chernobyl

nuclear power plant disaster on the Saami people, as does ICC Resolution 86-27 and HJR4.

- SJR22 makes no mention of the grassroots 'nuclear free' movement worldwide. ICC Resolutions 86-29 and 86-27 both call for support of a global nuclear disarmament.

- SJR22 does not mention the great risks involved in the transportation and disposal of high-level nuclear waste and its serious health, safety and environmental consequences. These issues are cited in the ICC Resolutions 77-06, 77-11, 83-01, 86-26, 86-27 and 86-29.

- SJR22 only addresses the area above the Arctic Circle. This disenfranchises the great majority of Alaskans in other parts of the state, including many Native communities.

- HJR has 10 sponsors. SJR22 has only one.

- SJR22 has yet to pass through even one of the four Senate committees it must hurdle just to get to a floor vote. It is highly unlikely that this resolution will have time to clear both the House and Senate.

The ICC has been working for 10 years to gain support for such a measure. We have waited far too long for recognition of the threat of nuclear war, nuclear weapons, testing and deployment and the use of the Arctic and sub-Arctic for such activities.

The ICC strongly urges the members of the Alaska Legislature to support the passage of HJR4.