

Part Two of Series —

FAA responds to anti-Native bias charge

By Martha Upicksoun

In response to a class action discrimination complaint filed by two Alaska Natives, Frank Pagano and Frank Peratrovich, a high-ranking Federal Aviation Administration official has made two major statements with regard to the validity of the charges. These statements seem unusual in light of his initial statement that he would not talk about the systematic discrimination

case.

The official, Garland Castleberry, executive official of the FAA's Alaska region, first stated that "Pagano said that this (discrimination) is the case today. I'm saying, I know that happened, management knows that as well."

At a later point in an interview with the Tundra Times he stated that "It's not proper to discriminate. We

don't do that. And anyone who does will have a serious problem. We want specifics. That's all we're asking for. Bring me the evidence and I'll do something."

It was earlier reported (Part One of this series) that Pagano and Peratrovich filed individual and class action complaints against the FAA "in order to end the FAA's present and past practices of invidious racial dis-

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crimination against us individually and against other people of our race."

Specifically, they have charged that Alaska Natives have been denied equal employment, training and promotion.

They alleged that Natives were and are placed in undesirable locations; training programs and

has increased from 1,590 in 1974 to the current high of 1,623. During the same period, the FAA's percentage of "Aleut, Eskimo and American Indian" has decreased from a 1974 high of 168 to the current low of 94 (10.6 percent versus six percent).

More specifically, the number of Aleuts has decreased from a 1974 figure of 49 to a 1979 fig-

Alaska Natives.

Bob Faith the regional chief of the agency, explained: "There's no way we can figure out the decline in numbers. We can't seem to understand. We make a special concerted effort to go out and get the minorities, and especially some of the Alaska Natives."

Castleberry seemingly contradicted Faith when he said: "We

just as soon as we get 'em qualified they don't stay too awfully long, and they go out the back door. And I wish that we could figure out why—you know, a lot of them are that way."

He added that "somehow or other there's got to be a reason. Now, if it's a reason that they're uncomfortable in their surroundings or that they're not put in a facility back where they came from, then I think we can do something to correct that."

Both Faith and Castleberry are relatively new to their jobs. Both are concerned about their affirmative action program and the class action suit.

While neither admit that discrimination within the FAA exists or has been exposed, they are searching and planning for improvements. They are "going to go for target areas." They want good communication with all of the Native organizations.

They want to talk to people who have suggestions. They want to hire "all Alaskans, and not pay to bring somebody up from the United States for \$25,000-30,000 per move." Tucker also suggested that the FAA needed to "establish some training to arrive at cross-cultural awareness."

Faith further stated, though, that the FAA is not as effective as they would like it to be. He and his staff attribute this to several causes. They mentioned the pipeline economy as a possible reason for the statistical decline of Alaska Natives. They said the Air Traffic Control test, a basic entrance test, resulted in poorer than average minority scores—but it also serves as the

source of the employment pool.

He added that the nature of the FAA—its "technical work"—lead to the FAA being at the bottom of the Department of Transportation as far as equal employment opportunities are concerned.

And in addressing the federal government as a whole, Tucker explained that "nationwide, the federal establishment has recognized that their annual Affirmative Action programs were not working, were not producing results, they don't produce. We all have to recognize that we all have not produced the results that we have to produce. Because each year we spent a significant portion of the time developing an action plan, and by the time the year was up, we spent more time developing it and playing with it than we had accomplishing anything."

Tucker's analysis seems to be indicative of the FAA's Alaska region—whose equal employment opportunity advisory committee has not met in one-and-a-half years.

The FAA management has seemingly placed itself in a "freeze" position. They are willing to admit that they have not been effective equal opportunity employers. They say that they are confused. And, as Faith said, "We (at the FAA) are willing to try and do anything."

The accept the fact that they have a "definite problem." Faith said that "we (at the FAA) do have a problem attracting the Alaska Native to come to work with us."

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"We break our necks to seek out and get qualified (Native) people. And, darn it, just as soon as we get 'em qualified they don't stay too awfully long, and they go out the back door. And I wish that we could figure out why — you know, a lot of them are that way." — Bob Faith, FAA regional chief

periods were and are excessive, inappropriate or inadequate; encouragement and support were and are lacking; progression to the journeyman level was and is slower for Natives; recruits were and are infrequently hired; ranking factors for jobs were and are biased; and under-representation of Alaska Natives was and is prevalent within the FAA.

Numerical figures and formal complaints supports the fact that racial discrimination may exist within the FAA, but the FAA management is reluctant to admit to any present wrongdoing.

The figures themselves are enlightening. The Native population of the state is approximately 20 percent, but only five percent of the FAA's staff is Alaska Native. And even while the FAA has stated that the Native labor force is 10.5 percent of the state's population, the record shows that the agency is employing less than 50 percent of its potential Native labor force.

The FAA's Alaska region staff

ure of 25. The American Indians (of which Alaskan Indians are included in the FAA employment information roster) have dwindled from 74 in 1974 to 37 in 1979. Likewise, the Eskimos (who held the fewest spots to begin with) fell from 45 in 1974 to 35 people in 1979.

The FAA does not fully employ Alaska Natives in any major occupational areas. The best utilization of Natives is in the electronic technicians field, where 10.3 percent (or 31 out of 300) of the work force is Alaska Native. 3.4 percent (or 20 out of 589) of the air traffic control division is Alaska Native. 7.3 percent (or 9 out of 123) of the FAA's clerical help is Native. And .3 percent (or 2 out of 103) of the engineers claim Native ancestry.

In spite of these black-and-white figures, the FAA management, of which Alaska Natives comprise less than 2 percent, is reluctant to conclusively explain the overall decline of minority employees (from 236 in 1974 to 191 in 1979), especially

(at the FAA) are very much aware of the need for improvement. We know the past problems, the procedural things and all the other details of why we haven't done things."

Ann Tucker, civil rights staff chief, added that "statistics alone do not necessarily represent discrimination. They definitely show that we (as far as minorities, go.) are under-represented. The Aleut, Eskimo and Indians are under-represented. That would on the face of it appear to be discrimination. But supporting documentation of discrimination has to back it. On the face of it, though, our statistics don't look good."

Faith, the regional director, continued. "I really wish that somehow or other we could find out (why the statistics don't look good). We break our necks to seek out and get qualified (Native) people. And, darn it,