

## ***Editorial—***

# **Salute to AFN, NCAI**

Perhaps best known as native organizations in the nation, the Alaska Federation of Natives and the National Congress of American Indians became focal points of activity last week and this week in the City of Anchorage. The AFN held its annual convention last week and the NCAI is holding its annual gathering for the first time in its history in Alaska this week.

The two native organizations have a very significant something in common. Their people and their ancestors were, and are, the original inhabitants of their lands. The organizations are pooled leaders of their aboriginal people. One group (NCAI) has felt the cruel uprooting of its life bonds and its deep-rooted reverence for its lands.

The other (AFN), is being faced with the fate of the former. The group is trying to do something about it with the backing of its people and that of the NCAI. The AFN aboriginals also have the deepest kind of reverence for their lands. They want to hold on to as much of their lands as possible.

The AFN leaders are in the process of difficult negotiations with the lawmakers of the country trying to affect an equitable settlement of land problems so that enough land can be provided for their people. This will be channeled through a governmental process that will extricate and abolish forever their claims and actual uses to some 300 to 375 million acres in Alaska. Out of this huge area, AFN is holding firm to the demand of 40 million acres—a mere ten per cent of the entire area.

The two organizations of aboriginal origins are well known to concerned and responsible people throughout the nation. Their leaders' utterances are heeded at the level of the White House on down. They are their peoples' true representatives to centers of vast power. Their leadership qualities have been noted by the great and near great. Their leaderships can hold their heads high along with humility because they speak the truth thereof of the immense problems of their people throughout the nation.

The NCAI and the AFN have vast responsibilities. Their working levels arise from some of the world's greatest problems. The manner in which the leaders have met their responsibilities has been of stellar quality. The men and women who are so charged with those problems can speak with true authority and truth. Hence the heed they receive when they utter the situations of their people.

The Indians of the Lower 48 and the Indians, Aleuts and Eskimos of this northern land, we can say without reservations, on the whole have some of the ablest leaders that can be assembled at this time. They are the products of severe and dire backgrounds. They have blossomed from the mire of great afflictions and despair to lead their people.

With this quality of leadership, we look to the future of better life styles given dignity by rich cultural backgrounds and fine old traditions that can give spirit and drive to peoples who cling to them. To do it in this manner will be to instill dignity and strength to the people. The proof of this will be the heads held higher to face whatever problems the native people will encounter in the future.

We salute the leadership of the National Congress of American Indians and the leadership of the Alaska Federation of Natives.