

# No Native Girl Staters from Fairbanks

FAIRBANKS—The bush voting bloc at Girls State was a triangle this year. Just three Native representatives were chosen out of 56 statewide delegates, but they managed to hold their own, make a lot of friends and enjoy the session.

Attending the conference at the University of Alaska were Norma Perkins of Sitka, Linda Oxereok of Wales and Ethel Patkotak of Wainwright.

Miss Patkotak, who represented Mt. Edgecumbe, reported a classmate from Barrow was also scheduled to attend but something went wrong with her ticketing and no one's sure where she ended up.

Girls State is a nation wide program planned to show youngsters how government works. A mini-legislature is established and each delegate is given a politician's role to play.

The program is sponsored by American Legion Auxiliaries and

the Native representatives conceded there were very few Legion auxiliaries in rural Alaska to sponsor delegates.

"Still you wonder why Anchorage or Fairbanks didn't send any Native students. A lot of them go to school there on the boarding home program," Miss Patkotak observed.

"It must be some kind of a popularity thing," Linda Oxereok decided.

Karen Perdue, a Fairbanks delegate elected to the U.S. Se-

nate in the mock government, noticed the same problem.

"I was a little bit upset,"

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# Girls State, Fairbanks...

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she told the Tundra Times. "Also, there was only one black girl and I felt that was a token thing."

The two delegates from Alaska Girls State to the national convention were both from Anchorage, she added.

"I think one of them, at least, should have been from the northern part of the state because it's a vital part of Alaska."

Miss Perdue said the six Fairbanks delegates all made application for Girls State and were chosen by counselors. All were non-Native, she was sorry to note.

The three Native students were picked by faculty vote with emphasis placed on high scholastic record. Miss Oxereok represented Beltz School in Nome and Norma Perkins was one of four delegates from Sitka High Schools.

As make-believe-legislators they backed much legislation that their real life rural counterparts favor: state aid to local school boards, preferential hire for Alaskans, counseling for juvenile delinquents.

On the first ballot to elect officers, delegates were asked to write down issues they thought most important to the state. Number one was the pipeline; two, ecology; and three, Native land claims.

The Native representatives agreed and were disappointed to find no legislation was submitted on number three.

"Native land claims was a campaign issue. A lot of candidates said it was important," Miss Oxereok recalls. "I was going to put in a bill on it but I thought someone else would do it. No one did and now the deadline for submitting bill is passed."

"Those of us from the Northwest are a minority," added

Miss Patkotak. "The others, they'll kill down something they don't understand real fast."

None of the Native delegates tried to run for office.

"I didn't because I'm new to this stuff but I'm learning," Miss Oxereok explained.

"I thought I understood government but I didn't. I've learned a lot these few days. Now when I go home I can read the papers and understand what's going on," Miss Perkins said.

For a beginner, though, she did all right, being elected chairman of her House Commerce Committee. She chose Ethel Patkotak as her assistant so they had their committee under control.

Miss Oxereok served in the Senate where she was assigned to Health, Education and Welfare and Judiciary committees. Miss Patkotak was also elected regional representative to the Central Committee.

None of the girls sponsored bills but they did work hard for passage of several measures.

"I'm interested in restriction of food stamps so the people who really need them can get them...Also establishment of a permanent fire fighting force in our area," Miss Patkotak said.

Linda Oxereok favored mandatory education in sex and health.

"When we get older we don't know what we should do," she explained.

Miss Perkins questioned a bill which would have opened bars only from 2 a.m. until 5 a.m. and the measure failed.

One bill on which they all agreed would have combined Girls State with Boys State.

"It was the first bill to pass," Miss Perkins reported. "They've passed it for a number of years, though, and so far nothing has come of it."