

No cannery bias found

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A federal judge has found no merit to a \$15 million lawsuit that alleged several Alaska canneries intentionally discriminated against Filipinos by restructuring them to the worst jobs, accommodations and food.

U.S. District Judge Justin Quackenbush of Spokane said in a 73-page opinion the cannery workers had failed to present "persuasive evidence of discriminatory intent." The judge's decision was dated Oct. 31 and filed with the court clerk on Nov. 4.

Affected by the 1974 class action suit are about 2,000 workers, said Abraham Arditi, the plaintiffs' attorney. Arditi said an appeal was planned.

The defendants included Ward Cove Packing Co.; Bumble Bee Seafoods division of Castle & Cook Inc., and Columbia Wards Fisheries.

Quackenbush, who presided over a two-week, non-jury trial in 1982, cited strict health regulations in upholding the requirement that workers speak English for upper-level jobs.

"The slightest mistake in calibrating can size . . . for example, could result in a threat of widespread botulism, a disease fatal to humans," Quackenbush wrote.

Quackenbush said he was "unable to find that non-whites were singled out because of race with respect to fraternization with the women or with respect to 'menial' jobs such as grass cutting."