

letters

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Alaska Bible College

Dear Editor:

The Alaska Bible College of Glennallen, Alaska was awarded the "Candidate for Accreditation" status by the American Association of Bible Colleges. The U.S. Office of Education and the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation recognize the American Association of Bible Colleges as the official accrediting agency for Bible colleges in North America.

The Alaska Bible College began in 1966 as a ministry of the Central Alaskan Missions which was founded by Rev. Vincent J. Joy. Accreditation with a national agency has been a goal of the college since its inception. The college has a three year period in which to act upon the recommendations of the accrediting agency prior to a final evaluation with the view towards full accreditation.

The Alaska Bible College exists primarily to "develop leaders for Christian ministries for the local church and worldwide missions." We offer quality Christian education to young Alaskans through Biblical, professional, and liberal art studies leading to a Bachelor of Arts or Associate of Arts degree.

The Alaska Bible College is an inter-denominational college which holds to the position that the Bible is the absolute authority for faith and practice. All students major in the Bible. Recently we conducted a survey of our graduates. We subjected our primary aim to measurement in terms of performance and discovered that 94% of them are involved in church or mission ministries.

I would like to extend our warmest hospitality to you should you come through the area. Please stop by.

Cordially,
Bob Lee
President

Takes issue with TT

Dear Editor:

Regarding your editorial in the Dec. 7, 1977 issue of Tundra Times, I'll accept the odds. Last estimate put the number of private individuals involved in market investments of all sorts, from the relatively mild New York Stock Exchange to the relatively volatile Chicago Grain Market and various commodity exchanges, at several million. Of those millions, some live in Alaska. Of those who live in Alaska, several must make investments which require scrutiny of financial reports, otherwise such firms as Foster and Marshall would not be in business. I, as one investor residing in Alaska, can read the Alaska Native Land Claims Act and understand it. I, as one investor residing in Alaska, can read and interpret a corporation's financial report. And from the weekly spotlight on "Business Leader of the Week" in your newspaper, I suspect that there are several very capable Natives who can read and understand not only the A.N.C.S.A but also a financial report.

The financial plight of the Bering Straits Corporation is indeed disturbing, as is the bankruptcy of any corporation. What I would like to know is why is it thought that Native corporations are immune from financial failure? Of the several businesses that are begun each year, barely one in five survive

the second year of operation. Based on this fact, the success of Native corporations is nothing short of phenomenal. As far as Native shareholders "losing" control of their destinies simply because they were new to the game," it can be pointed out that the same information is available to all investors in any market scheme. The differences between investors, both geographical and personal, boil down to one significant feature: judgment. Even those investors who have acute judgment lose money, and some others make money. Not everyone by virtue of the fact that they invest some money are given any guarantee of success. Investment is risk, and sometimes that risk costs money.

Furthermore, it was with the concurrence of Native groups that the corporate and market paradigm was proposed as a mechanism for dispersal of funds, thereby sidestepping the errors so evident in the United States' foreign aid policy, maximizing individual Native self-determination. I quote from page 153 of Robert Arnold's "Alaska Native Land Claims": "There was no mention of corporations in the first bills in 1967 to settle Alaska Native claims. These bills would have resolved claims through 'tribes, bands, villages, communities, associations or other identifiable groups of Eskimos, Indians and Aleuts.' Beginning with the Governor's Task Force Bill of 1968, however, business corporations were proposed as the means of carrying out the settlement and after that time were fully accepted. Indeed, the theme of the 1971 Convention of the AFN, the last held before Congress adopted the act, was 'In the White Man's Society, We Need White Man's Tools'."

Mr. Emil Notti is quoted on page 5 of your Dec. 7, 1977 issue as saying "that Alaska claims did not take place under true negotiations. The Congress went behind closed doors and wrote out the settlement act... and as a result, the Alaska Natives lost many major points in their negotiations." I would like to point out that that was not actually the case, and to the extent it is true, it should be added that the consideration of most bills by committee is done "behind closed doors." Furthermore, there was Alaskan Native representation in one of the committees in the person of Alaska's newly elected congressman, Nick Begich, who had been appointed to a seat on the Aspinall committee. In fact, it was due to Mr. Begich's heroic efforts in 1971 that the legislative deliberations were kept going in the face of Aspinall's desire to shut down subcommittee deliberations. In early August, 1971 a report was made to the Aspinall committee which incorporated not only the land and money settlement but "also incorporated the concept of regional corporations sought by the AFN." (Arnold, p. 141). Further indications that Native Alaskans were instrumental in the negotiations are evident in the sophisticated political tactic that "Native leaders relied on competition between the two bodies (House of Representatives and the Senate) to produce a favorable Senate bill" (Arnold, p. 142). That such was the outcome is evident in the statement "Of the several dozen compromises reached in the 29-page bill, the key features were generally favorable to the AFN position" (Arnold, p. 142). Lastly, a rare move by President Nixon allowed the 600 delegates to the AFN convention in Anchorage on Dec. 16, 1971 to vote on the act's acceptability. "Two days later, by a vote of 511 to 56, the Alaska Feder-

ation of Natives accepted the settlement. By special telephone arrangements, the President was advised of the acceptance. Then the delegates, standing motionless and silent, heard the President say, "I want you to know that I have just signed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act." (Arnold, p. 144). Not many groups in the United States ever get the courtesy of voting on the acceptability of laws that affect them. Of the over 200 bills signed into law since Carter's inauguration, not one group or individual was ever asked if they accepted it. It would seem, then, that the truth of the matter is that in spite of smoke-filled room politics, the Natives of Alaska had a great deal of input into the negotiations. It may not have been as much as some would have wanted, but in the end the Natives of Alaska were extended an exceptional courtesy by a president of the United States.

I would also like to address Thomas Richards' column entitled "Interracial Marriages." As unfortunate as it was for Lt. Gov. Thomas to make his comments on black-white relationships, it seems to me that far too much attention is being given to an incident of one having put his foot in his mouth. Let us forget, during his campaign it was Jimmy Carter who made the remark about "ethnic purity" and yet I didn't notice the press undertaking any great endeavor to characterize assassinate Mr. Carter. Furthermore, let us judge a man by his actions. Often it is more important what a man does, than what he says. Maybe we Alaskans can take lessons from those of Massachusetts who chose to forgive Teddy Kennedy after the Chappaquiddick affair. If not, then we should at least be consistent in our denunciations.

Sincerely yours,
Gordon E. Castanza

EDITOR'S NOTE: We read Mr. Castanza's letter with great interest and found most of his observations quite lucid. However, there are several points we would like to raise in counterpoint to his assertions:

First, we never intended to convey the impression that all Alaska Natives are backward people and incapable of reading annual reports and financial statements. Certainly Native regional and village corporations boast a number of excellent managers and leaders who can not only read this data but also formulate good investment judgements besides.

Although we do not dispute the assertion that one in every five businesses started each year ultimately fails, we would remind our readers that Alaska Native corporations must survive in order to protect the most precious asset of the land claims settlement—the LAND. If the corporation goes, the land goes. There would be nothing of value left.

Alaska Natives are not whimpering at the first sign of difficulty with the corporate structure that Mr. Castanza correctly states they lobbied for. They realize that they must their corporations work in order to protect their land.

What lends a special drama to the continuing drama of the land claims implementation is that Native shareholders are willing to demand more of their corporations than the average American shareholder. They are demanding a significant, continuing role in corporate management to a degree unheard of in the business world to date.

If this dream is to be realized, more than a few Native shareholders need to become familiar with the workings and language of their corporations.