

# **RCA's Agi meets with bush caucus**

## **From Our Juneau Bureau**

Ben Agi, president of RCA Alascom, met with members of the bush caucus in Juneau last week and explained some of the ongoing RCA programs and plans for the future in the bush and urban areas of Alaska. Among the largest of their programs is the system of earth stations in 100 rural villages.

Agi said that RCA will be applying for a rate increase with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in March. Agi said that since RCA took over the long line system in 1971 rates for intra-state calls were decreased by FCC order by 22 percent last July. Agi said that the FCC feels that calls

from Alaska to the continental United States (lower '48) should be the same as for calls made between like distances within the lower '48. According to Agi "this sounds good. We'd like to reduce and we'd like the lower '48 to eat it." Agi says that RCA estimates substantial losses on calls made within the state of Alaska and that inter-state calls have subsidized intra-state calls. Agi said one of the factors involved in RCA's loss is the dispute over distribution of tariffs between the local exchange companies and RCA.

Agi said that the bush program is going according to schedule but says the ownership question regarding the earth stations is still up in the air. Following a long battle about who would be given the go-ahead with the program and agreed to argue ownership before the FCC later.

In a long, warm meeting Agi answered questions from bush legislators regarding regional projects at which time Agi announced that RCA will intervene in the hearings on Interior Telephone's plans to provide (exchange) service to the Calista region.