



LARGEST BANQUET AUDIENCE — Last Saturday night a greatest assemblage of people converged into the Discovery Ballroom of the Captain Cook Hotel in Anchorage numbering 1200. Part of the crowd is seen attentively watching enchanting Buffy Sainte-Marie as the talented singer performs. The great audience broke the attendance record of any social event in Alaska, including last year's Tundra Times Banquet attendance which was a record breaker. — JIMMY BEDFORD Photo

Buffy Sainte-Marie Wows Largest Banquet Audience In Newspaper's History

By CHUCK MALLEY

ANCHORAGE — "There's a really good feeling here," one dinner-goer was heard remarking at Saturday night's Tundra Times banquet in Anchorage.

That neatly sums up what was happening as Cree Indian singer Buffy Sainte-Marie wowed an overflow crowd of 1200 at the Captain Cook Hotel.

It may have been the warmest, friendliest Tundra Times banquet to date.

An internationally known entertainer capable of commanding top dollar for personal appearances, Sainte-Marie did this one on the house. "I'm here because the Tundra Times asked me to come," she said simply.

Her presence had a lot to do with setting a new record for the second year in a row for the largest sit-down dinner in Alaska, both at Tundra Times banquets.

At once a fierce, angry spokesperson for Canadian and American Indians and a warm, soulful personality, Sainte-Marie

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TALENTED ENTERTAINER — Buffy wows the big audience as she skillfully belts her songs she composed herself. The internationally known Cree Indian performer, who can draw top dollar for her routines, came to help raise funds for the Tundra Times donating her services. — JIMMY BEDFORD Photo

Buffy Wows 'em . . .

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reached out to Alaska Natives for the first time, traveling here from her home in Hawaii.

"I think you guys sold out to cheaply," she said in a reference to the Native Land Claims Settlement Act. "But now that it's done, use your pennies well and hang on to the rest of this place (Alaska) because it's beautiful."

With that, the powerful-voiced Sainte-Marie delivered a host of self-authored songs, among them "My Country 'Tis of Thy People You're Dying," "Now that the Buffalo's Gone," "Till It's Time for You to Go," and "Piney Wood Hills."

She also chanted in Cree a piece about the Indians' deep feelings for the land. It's meaningful, she said, "whether you're a Native of anywhere."

It seemed clear that Sainte-Marie was glad to be where she was and would be back. Her songs dealt with love and soul as well as protest and when she finished 1200 people were on their feet, some with tears in their eyes.

At the head table with the singer were George Attla, champion dog musher from Huslia, Morris Thompson, head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, from Tanana; Frank Dignan of Unalakleet, recipient of the 1974 Alaska Federation of Natives Citizen of the Year Award; Kekoa Kaapu, president of the Hawaiian Aloha Association; U.S. Senator Mike Gravel; Gov. William Egan; Howard Rock, editor of the Tundra Times; Mrs. Egan; Washington State Congressman Lloyd Meeds, principle speaker; Marilyn Pete of Bethel, 1974 Miss Eskimo-Indian Olympics, Roger Lang, banquet master-of-ceremonies and president of AFN, and Oden Brewer, student-at-large.

Meeds, a longtime friend of Alaskan Native interests in Congress, warned that "implementation" of the Claims Act "is more important than passage of the bill itself."

He urged Native cooperation with the white man. "Some of it will be bad, some good," said Meeds. He said that the historic relationship of Natives with their land must be dealt with realistically by both whites and Natives.

Meeds endorsed Gov. Egan, Sen. Gravel and Willie Hensley the Eskimo candidate for Congress whose name moved the crowd to wild applause when Miles Brandon took the microphone to say, "Let us hope that

we can call our next Congressman 'Willie'."

Egan espoused his administration's rural education program and said of Howard Rock: "He has touched the lives of all Alaskans; his name is mentioned from Ketchikan to Barrow."

The governor, in connection with his talk on education, said, "Rock's paper is one of the most valuable textbooks anywhere."

In his brief address thanking dinner-goers whose \$15 a ticket goes to support the Tundra Times, Rock said the tiny but influential Eskimo-Indian-Aleut paper is finally operating in the black. "It made a \$2.75 profit as of the last audit."

Fred Stickman Sr., whose letters to the Tundra Times are read faithfully by the paper's audience, was presented with a "Letter-to-the-Editor" award. Marilyn Richards and Agnes Pete, two Native college students, were awarded plaques for their work on the paper and Rock was presented with a 1975 AFN calendar which designates August as "Howard Rock Month."

There weren't quite enough seats for everyone at the seventh and largest Tundra Times banquet, but from now on it looks like folks will have to come early to what Congressman Meeds called "the biggest social event of the year in the State of Alaska."