

Kito Flays Elmer Rasmuson for Endorsement Try at AFN Meeting

FAIRBANKS—A native leader from Petersburg, now living in Fairbanks, has criticised Elmer Rasmuson for trying to rig an endorsement for himself at the native convention here last week.

Sam Kito, a Tlingit Indian from Petersburg now working as an electronic technician at Gilmore Creek, said he thought it was disgraceful and undignified for a native leader to lend support to Rasmuson for money.

Kito referred to articles in the Tundra Times, the Anchorage News, and the Anchorage Times that mentioned that Fred Notti, Flore Lekanof, and Dan Lisbournt, all native leaders, had been paid by Rasmuson to fly to villages to arrange support at the AFN convention.

"I am happy no endorsement was made at the convention

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SAM KITO . . .

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under these compromising circumstances," he said.

"Maybe some native leaders can be bought off, but I am proud they could make no progress in buying the convention."

Kito further said that it was against tradition for most long established native organizations to make political endorsements, and that most groups had even refrained from endorsing their own native legislators.

Rasmuson is a Republican banker while most natives are Democrats and are mostly poor, he indicated.

"Since Rasmuson is Alaska's wealthiest man it seems to me that he should feel that native support was just a matter of money," said Kito.

"I can well recognise why Rasmuson thought he did not stand much of a chance for native support," Kito said, "but if he wanted that support he should have come to the convention armed with ideas and progressive programs—not money."

"I feel ashamed for those that would sell out their heritage and village for money," he added.

Kito charged that Rasmuson paid for transportation in some cases, liquor, and hotel rooms of delegates, but said that this pressure could not sway the strong tradition of non-endorsement brought to the convention by regional native groups.

"I don't think the hiring of mercenaries is the way to gain native support and votes," Kito said, "and it seems to me this was an unmerciful attempt to capitalize on the poverty of the native people and their awakening political movement."

"We all favor different candidates, and should work in their behalf without thought of money payoffs."