

SPECIAL TAX SEMINAR HELD FOR FISHERMEN

Cited Major Means of Employment

On the 20th of January, a special tax seminar for commercial fishermen was held in Anchorage at the Anchorage Westward Hotel.

This came about through Ed Ness, a trainer for RurAL CAP, who established the contacts with the tax people to conduct a tax session centered specifically toward the individual commercial fisherman.

It was felt that a tax session of this nature was needed since one of the major means of employment in the state of Alaska is commercial fishing.

Along with aid from Community Enterprise Development Corporation, the IRS and the State Department of Revenue worked out an agenda together and a date and place was reserved for the session.

The session started at 9:00 A.M. with a welcoming address by Ron Haines, Executive President of Community Enterprise Development Corporation. Then the floor was turned over to the representative from IRS and the State Department of Revenue.

The main subjects covered on the agenda centered around the procedures of filling out individual tax returns. Through discussion, questions were answered in areas concerning computation related to depreciation of fishing gear and equipment.

They also related how to

handle expenses relevant to boat improvements and repair.

Also covered during the session was employment taxes related to shares and other wages. Answered were such questions as: "Who withholds taxes for whom in a fishing venture," and "What type of taxes can or should be withheld."

Charles McVay, Chief Audit Division, had this to say about the session:

"It was a session that was long overdue and gave us a chance to get together with fishermen to discuss some rather complicated areas of tax law in their own terms and relate them to their circumstances.

"Unfortunately we don't have the manpower to get out and participate in such meetings throughout the state. We do hope we can establish meaningful and productive communication through some effective medium with all the fishermen."

Stan McCartney, Internal Revenue Agent, had commented:

"I think that it's good that the taxpayer has a one-to-one, first hand contact with the IRS through seminars such as the one conducted with the fishermen."

"It has been a number of years since the IRS has participated in a program such as this. This enables the taxpayer to ask any questions he may have about his own problems. In this way he receives a direct answer to his questions."

A questionnaire was circulated to be turned in at the end of the session. The questionnaire asked if the seminar was helpful.

The majority answered "yes" to this question. There were a few who thought the answers given by the tax people were confusing. Others thought that the tax people should have gone into more detail on specific issues.

There was a definite realization that the tax people needed to increase their knowledge in the fishing industry in order to present a clearer picture.

However, when the question of holding more sessions of this nature in different areas of the state was asked, again the majority of the answers on the questionnaire was "yes".

Areas mentioned in the survey where sessions would be helpful were: Bristol Bay, Southeastern, Kodiak, Kenai, Homer, Prince William Sound, Aleutian Chain and points in the northwestern part of the state.

Since this tax session was the first of its kind to be held in Alaska where the individual fishermen could establish a first hand person-to-person contact with representatives of both the Internal Revenue Service and the State Department of Revenue, there were answers that may have sounded confusing to the fishermen.

However, the IRS in future sessions related to the concerns of commercial fisherman, can use this first session as a guideline and adjust their presentations and discussions according to the wishes of the commercial fishermen.