

AFN'S DON WRIGHT OUSTED



OUSTED AFN PRESIDENT — Donald R. Wright who has been a dynamic president of the statewide organization was voted out of his office last Saturday on the grounds of mismanagement

of his office. Wright expended tremendous energy working for equitable settlement of Alaska Native land claims.

— LAEL MORGAN Photograph

Board Votes to Divest Duties of President, Hensley Picked as Head

By MARGIE BAUMAN
(Courtesy of Anchorage Daily News)

ANCHORAGE — Board members of the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc., have ousted President Donald Wright and elected state Sen. Willie Hensley of Kotzebue to head the statewide organization.

The move came Saturday in the second day of a four day meeting of the board at Anchorage.

Wright argued that he had called for the meeting to be held at the Wildwood education facility near Kenai and that the Anchorage session was not an official board meeting.

The friction and election of one Alaska native land claims leader to replace another came amidst reports of mounting



Will Fight Ouster

Don Wright will fight ouster saying he is duly elected president by the people. See story on page 6.

financial troubles for AFN which fought successfully for a 40 million acre, nearly 1 billion land claims settlement.

The 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act allotted neither funds nor land to the statewide federation whose membership consists of representatives of 12 regional native corporations so deficits do not effect future income of native stockholders. Government grants for social services and regional contributions have financed its operations.

The session began Friday with an auditors report showing deficits running to thousands of

NEW AFN PRESIDENT — Sen. Willie Hensley, D-Kotzebue, was elected AFN president to replace Don Wright.

dollars per month made to an informal board meeting.

Auditors made a red-ink analysis of operations of the old AFN and AFN, Inc. organized in January.

"There is a lack of documentation in the land lobbying effort and all records are in very poor shape," said the auditors report.

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Also cited were overexpenditures in the AFN Health Right program and the purchase of two airplanes by AFN, Inc., neither of which were authorized by the board.

By Saturday the eight board members present agreed unanimously to oust Wright and elect Hensley, representative of NANA Regional Corp., Inc. as president.

Also elected were John Borbridge, Jr., Juneau president of Sealaska Corp., the regional corporation of southeastern Alaska natives, as chairman; Joseph Upicksoun, Barrow president of the Arctic Slope Regional Corp., vice chairman; Nels Anderson, Dillingham, executive director of the Bristol Bay Native Corp., treasurer.

Legal counsel present at the Anchorage session (Fairbanks attorney Barry Jackson) advised the board that it had legal power to terminate the term of a corporation officer if the board deemed it was in the best interests of the corporation.

The board cited "lack of fiscal control and expenditures that the board was never fully advised of or consented to" in a discussion preceding the vote to oust Wright but the board moved further to send a letter of appreciation to Wright commending him for his "contributions to the native movement and great role in settling the land claims."

Wright and Alaska Native Foundation President Emil Notti were accorded the honorary title of president emeritus of AFN, Inc., with privilege of the floor at all board meetings but no voting powers.

Sunday, the board, bent on straightening out sticky internal financial problems, began a close examination of housing, education and health programs of the organization.

A special meeting of the board was called for Monday with AFN Executive Director Harry Carter scheduled to deliver a full administrative report on the status of various AFN programs. Wright was expected to be in Anchorage but was not available for comment on the weekend's proceedings.

With nine members present Sunday the board began a nitty gritty examination of various programs under the operation of AFN, Inc.

"We are examining the financial status of each of the programs and preparing to take positive steps for assuring fiscal stability of the programs individually and the AFN operation overall," said Borbridge.

"The board is asserting its prerogatives. We must put our house in order if we are to deal with bigger things in the future," he said.

The board was expected to approve a resolution requesting the U. S. Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, to work to insure that pending legislation before congress relating to housing provide for adequate funding and other authorities to handle relocation requirements, local tax considerations, proper planning and construction under the Indian housing program in Alaska.

"It is necessary that federal policy commitment to the Indian housing program correspond with adequate financial and technical resources to insure the successful implementation of the Indian housing program in Alaska," said the resolution

written after Sunday session by Hensley and Robert Loescher of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska.

"There was a public commitment for 1200 units of low income housing a year for five years," noted Hensley after listening to Loescher's report on problems of red tape and funding in the housing program.

"I think the facts should be known at this point," Hensley said. "We can only speculate as to why they are refusing any more program reservations" (for housing).

The Sunday session began on an unusual note with an Anchorage Police sergeant at the door and six legislative candidates on the sidelines with Laura "Sasha" McCarley, a local writer.

McCarley, who threatened to sue the board for ousting Wright, insisted her life had been threatened and that she needed police protection at the meeting, police said.

One of the legislative candidates said McCarley had called him at home Saturday night to say Wright had been ousted and that she expected much trouble the following morning, so would he please attend.

"It looks like a very orderly meeting," he said on his way out.

McCarley spoke privately with several board members saying they had not right to oust Donald Wright but did not ask to address the board.

In other weekend action, the board:

- Refused to act on the letter of resignation of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and received assurance from Upicksoun that ASRC would be able to resolve its differences with AFN.

- Accepted the resignation of Phillip Guy, Kwethluk, representing the Calista Corp., and appointment of Robert Nick, Nanapitchuk, in his place.

- Accepted "reluctantly" the resignation of Al Nakak, a candidate for the state house from Nome and appointment of Martin Olson, Golovin, to represent Bering Straits Native Corp.

- Declined to make a recommendation on choice of a native coordinator for the Feder-

al State Land Use Planning Commission to allow prospects to do their own lobbying.

Those present for board meeting were Hensley, Sackett, Olson, Nick (arrived Sunday), Nels Anderson, Mike Swetzof, Henry Eaton, Borbridge and Cecil Barnes. Ewan, Upicksoun and George Miller were absent.