

Sealaska gets new president

By LAURY ROBERTS

An Ivy-League-trained businessman will move into the orange and blue president's office at Sealaska Native corporation Juneau headquarters October 1.

Michael Chittick, 36, is director of Rayoniers in Seattle, the wood products division of International Telephone and Telegraph, one of the top ten conglomerates in the United States.

Chittick comes to the state's largest Native corporation with a masters degree in business and engineering from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire and a reputation for having "consistently produced profits," according to a Sealaska press release.

He was chosen from among 15 candidates identified in a nationwide selection process conducted by an executive search firm. Sealaska paid approximately \$50,000 for the service. While the board of directors looked among its 15,000 shareholders, it could not find a prospect who met the criteria of experience in financial management of a firm doing more than \$100 million worth of annual business.

In a statement prepared by Sealaska, Chittick said, "Alaska in general, and Sealaska in particular, have a mutually bright future. Sealaska has the potential of becoming a major U.S. corporation." Chittick will be paid about \$100,000 per year.

Sealaska also announced last week the probable acquisition of Seattle-based Ocean Beauty Seafoods. While Byron Mallot, chairman of the board, would not talk about actual dollars involved, he said the purchase would more than quadruple the corporation's annual operating revenues, which were about \$13 million last year.

He added that the sale will far outdistance the worth of Sealaska's subsidiary, Alaska Brick Company. ABC was purchased several years ago for \$7 million, which, according to Mallot, would translate into \$12 million at today's values.

Ocean Beauty is the parent Company of a number of operations, including Kodiak King Crab half of which is also owned by a Japanese firm), the Juneau Cold Storage and Cannery, a similar plant at Hydaburg, and St. Elias processing in Prince William Sound.

"It will put Sealaska in the fish processing business

in Alaska in a big way," said Mallot. "We intend that any acquisition of Sealaska will, over time, result in shareholder employment wherever those opportunities exist."

The Juneau arm of Ocean Beauty employs about 100 persons, generally from union lists, during the peak fishing season. Ocean Beauty, formerly known as Washington Fish and Oyster Company, has been in business for over 70 years.

When asked about Japanese involvement in Ocean Beauty Companies, Mallot responded, "I'm not paranoid about the Japanese. If Americans would put their money where their mouth is, Japanese wouldn't be in Alaska."

Mallot termed the holdings of the Japanese firm, Marabini, in Kodiak King Crab as "essentially a passive investor and we intend it will stay that way."

But he added, "While Sealaska will purchase Ocean Beauty and own it outright, we're looking at the possibility of seeking other investment partners to increase our equity and working capital. Certainly among those we may be talking to is a Marabini."

The Ocean Beauty sale should be formally culminated before the end of the year.