

# Villagers: "You'll be hearing from us"

## Citizen's Conference sets goals for legislative session

BY JEFFREY R. RICHARDSON

JUNEAU—"You'll be hearing from us."

With these words, Robert Schaeffer of Kotzebue served notice on the Alaska State Legislature that rural Alaskans will maintain a high profile in Juneau to protect and advocate the interests of Alaska's bush communities.

Schaeffer was one of about 50 rural Alaskans who descended on the state capital last week for the Citizens' Participation Conference (CPC), designed to develop strategy in a legislature dominated by urban lawmakers. After two intensive days of workshops spent reviewing bills being debated by the legislature this session, CPC delegates reported their recommendations in five major categories: subsistence, alcoholism, energy, education and local government.

The recommendations were presented to a disappointing turnout of legislators at a Saturday luncheon. Of a total of 60 senators and representatives, only 10 showed up for the beginning of the lunch. Only four remained until the end of the four-hour session. They were Senators Jalmar Kerttula (Palmer) and Chancy Croft (Anchorage) and Representatives Alvin Osterback (Sand Point) and Red Swanson (Nenana).

Primary recommendations of the CPC were:

### ENERGY

—That a comprehensive state energy plan be developed under the direction of the governor with strong commitment to the implementation of the plan. CPC delegates agreed that an energy plan should consider: the impact of energy development on subsistence, local control of resource and energy development, taxation pressures on rural people, weighing the value of renewable and non-renewable resources and the impact of development of those resources and the development (not just the study) of alternative energy resources such as solar, wind, geothermal and tidal power.

—That a direct subsidy be authorized to assist the electrification efforts in rural areas and that the subsidy apply to communities not currently being served by the Alaska Village Electric Cooperative.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

—CPC delegates offered support in principle to legislation that would set a minimum level for revenue sharing, making funds available to many communities that do not qualify for state revenue sharing funds under existing formulas.

### EDUCATION

—The Citizen's Participation Conference called for adequate funding of Head Start programs throughout the state in keeping with delegates' concern for 100 percent educational support in the state.

—The CPC also recommended that an additional \$2 million appropriation be added to pending legislation to plan, develop and carry out bilingual/bicultural programs.

### ALCOHOLISM

—The primary recommendation of the CPC in this category was neatly summed up in the report of the alcoholism workshop, whose findings were endorsed by the whole conference: "We wholeheartedly re-endorse the Governor's alcohol package and express great concern over the fact that the bills introduced have had little action considering the amount of time that has

elapsed (nearly a year)."

### SUBSISTENCE

—The workshop on subsistence was attended by nearly 30 of the CPC delegates who examined 20 of the 27 pieces of proposed subsistence legislation now before the legislature. The conference endorsed the decentralization of state fish and game management, leaning towards bills introduced by Rep. Nels Anderson, with some modifications. Anderson has proposed a radical legislative solution to state mismanagement of subsistence resources, as opposed to Gov. Jay Hammond's administrative approach to solving the same long-stand-

ing problems.

The subsistence committee of the conference set forth its reasons for endorsing the Anderson approach:

"The committee desires regulatory, not advisory Boards, as each year the people see the recommendations of the local advisory Boards being neglected, and the recommendations of often-times "blinded, unaware" biologists being accepted. Last year only 20 percent of the local advisory committees' recommendations were approved, while over 90 percent of the biologists' recommendations were adopted by the State Board of

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**Fish and Board of Game.** This committee knows that the local regions are capable of managing the resource, as they have lived with the land and are dependent on these resources as their way of life."

—The CPC also supports creation of a permanent legislative committee on subsistence, less restrictive hunting of migratory birds, hiring of a subsistence economist within the Dept. of Commerce and Economic Development and the efforts of Inupiat Eskimos to manage the bowhead whale resource critical to their survival.

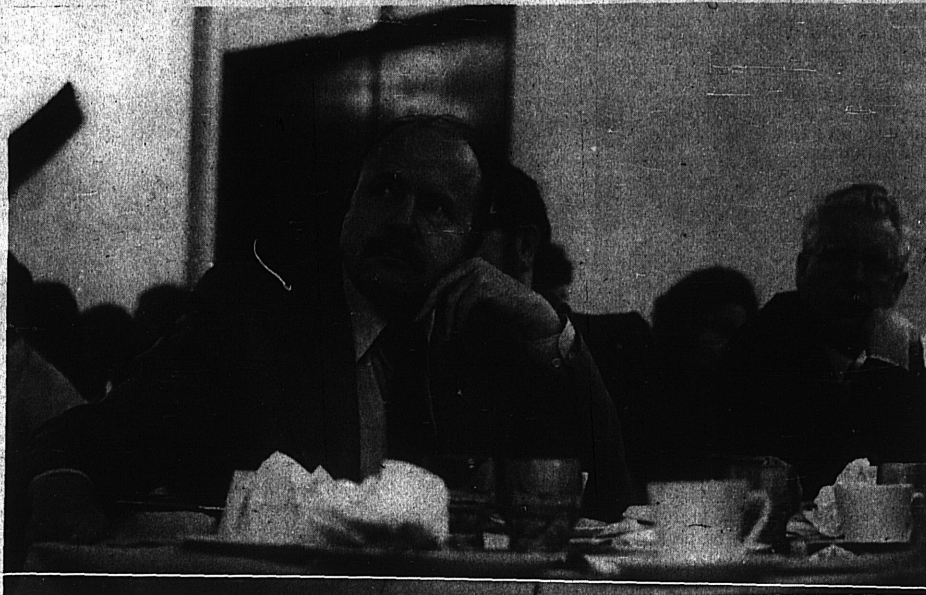
One final consideration of the committee was for additional legislation to be introduced that would appropriate state funds to local regional non-profit corporations in the state to enable them to conduct educational, research, and advocacy programs on subsistence in their region so the local regions will be better able and more prepared to respond to the concerns raised by the Interim Subsistence Committee.

Although CPC delegates were unhappy with the turnout of lawmakers, they were enthusiastic about the conference and its results. Many indicated the conference had been an invaluable learning process. Several were clearly impressed with the forceful presentation of Sen. Chancy Croft. Croft lambasted Gov. Jay Hammond for vetoing appropriations to fight alcoholism. He also echoed the strong mood of frustration that pervaded the conference about the performance of Sen. Mike Colletta of Anchorage and his Special Senate Committee on Alcoholism. Referring to Colletta's failure to introduce legislation after months of public hearings, Croft said:

"You can hardly find Senator Colletta, let alone the alcoholism package."

(A story in Monday's edition of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner said Colletta may be ready to introduce his legislation this week. Colletta has stated that he favors a reworking of state anti-alcoholism measures and an increase in state spending to combat the problem. He is steadfastly opposed to an increase in liquor taxes to meet the cost of alcohol abuse. Governor Hammond proposes taxing the liquor industry heavily to pay for programs and has offered no plan to alter the existing plan of attack on Alaska's number one health problem.)

Rep. Red Swanson told CPC delegates that he was finding little support in committee for his efforts to make sure that future borough governments carved out



Sen. Jalmar Kerttula of Palmer, a candidate for governor and Rep. Red Swanson of Nenana, a candidate for lieutenant governor (different tickets), listen intently to the legislative recommendations of the annual Citizens' Participation Conference, held last week in Juneau.

of the Alaskan bush have land for community use and expansion. He said powerful existing boroughs are dividing state land allocations among themselves.

Rep. Alvin Osterback, whose House Natural Resources Committee is now reviewing much of the subsistence legislation, said the committee would take a "long, hard look" at legislative reorganization of the Dept. of Fish and Game.

Sen. Jalmar Kerttula, a Democratic candidate for the governorship like Croft, told CPC delegates he too was disgruntled there had been so little action on alcoholism.

One of the most important actions taken by the

CPC delegates was to direct the legislative committee of the Rural Alaska Community Action Program Board to develop a way for rural Alaskans to take part in legislative advocacy throughout the year between the once-a-year CPC's. Rural CAP was one of the prime sponsors of the Citizen's Participation Conference, along with the Dept. of Community and Regional Affairs, Alaska Native Foundation, Alaska Federation of Natives and Alaska Legal Services Corp.

A few of the communities represented at the conference were: Klawock, St. Paul, Barrow, New Stuyahok, Ft. Yukon, Tanana, Kotzebue, Old Harbor, Akhiok, Bethel, Ruby and Copper Center.