

Inuits protest economic indifference

By PETER JULL

Economic development is the first priority of the Inuit people, executives of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference agreed at a meeting in Ottawa, Canada.

"Despite clear priorities, we governments continue to act without adequate regard to our economic interests," said President Hans Rosing of Greenland. "Not only must we make clear to governments that it is unacceptable to operate in the north without regard to the overwhelming population majority in those areas, but we must better organize ourselves and our working groups to ensure that we are able to overcome the disadvantages of distances, transportation costs and poor communications in dealing with governments."

Oscar Kawagley and Jim Stotts represented Alaska at the conference.

Two key problems discussed were the recent Canadian government decision to award the first Canada-Greenland air route to Bradley Air Services rather than to an Inuit-con-

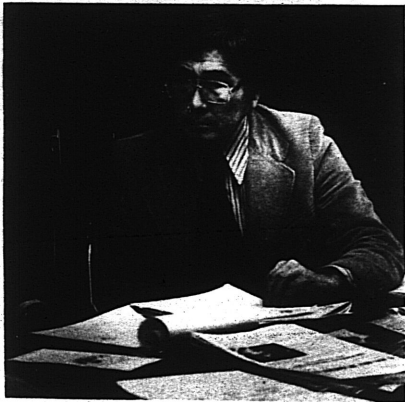
trolled enterprise, and the steady progress of the Arctic Pilot Project for shipment of liquified natural gas from the high arctic of Canada through the sensitive fishing grounds of Greenland.

In the case of the air route, Canadian Inuit representatives were taken by surprise when the air route was awarded. The conference executive agreed that a full investigation of this situation should be undertaken, both in Greenland and in Canada, to find out what happened and to attempt to have the decision annulled.

In the case of the Arctic Pilot Project, the Greenland people have been disturbed by the lack of information provided to the public on what is planned.

The main concern is that success of the pilot phase would lead the way open to ever more shipping in arctic waters.

The three member countries, Greenland, Canada and the United States, are now looking at possible joint ventures in which they would share their expertise



Oscar Kawagley at the Inuit conference in Greenland.

and resources in order to provide opportunities for Inuit which governments and non-Inuit companies

too often seem to overlook. In particular, the possibility of Greenland withdrawal from the European Economic Community (EEC) following a referendum in a year's time would drastically alter arctic economic relationships.

The Alaskan Inuit have been considering joint ventures with Greenland and Canadian Inuit through their economic development corporations established under the land claims settlements of 1971. The ICC agreed to study the possibilities further.