

Controversy Erupts at Tanana Chiefs Meeting

By TOM SNAPP

Native leaders here yesterday threatened to file suit against the federal and state governments for failure to provide regional high schools.

The action came after a stormy session in which Ralph Perdue, a representative of the Fairbanks Native Association, also said a resolution was being drafted to request the termination of Warren Tiffany, head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Education Branch.

Perdue made the statement after Tiffany and a number of native leaders engaged in a series of heated exchanges.

Tiffany defended the role of his agency in the development of schools for rural youth while the representatives gave a long list of the BIA's shortcomings. One representative charged that

the present school advisory board the present school advisory boards were handpicked by the BIA and that they were nothing

(Continued on page 6)

Controversy Erupts . . .

(Continued from page 1)

more than "puppet boards." Richard Frank, of Minto, said a resolution was being drawn up requesting that the Alaska Federation of Natives and the various associations would name members of school advisory boards.

Perdue explained the proposed court suit against the state and federal government would also seek to prevent native youngsters from being sent outside the state for their education.

"Our attorneys tell us that sending our children outside the state for schooling is definitely illegal," Perdue said.

Perdue brought out that a previous Tanana Chiefs Conference had passed a resolution to boycott the sending of youth to Chemawa schools in Oregon and Chilocco school in Oklahoma. The resolution was sent forthwith to Senator Bartlett.

It took Senator Bartlett all summer—from June to August—to get an answer from the BIA in Washington, Perdue said, and when the reply came the BIA cited one example, a letter from Henry Deacon, president of the village council of Grayling, to support its continued sending of youth outside to the Oregon and Oklahoma schools.

"There was just one person speaking against 34 villages," Perdue said. He claimed that the BIA had furnished Deacon's village with a housing project, with electricity, with water and sewage facilities and that now the BIA was using Deacon in an attempt to perpetuate a policy which was not desired by the large majority.

One representative demanded to know the total amount of "turn-around" money paid to BIA teachers. He said the "turn-around" pay was given to BIA teachers and their families for a two month vacation every two years. He cited the case of a woman in Sitka whose husband was a prominent and well-to-do. He said the woman, who is a BIA teacher, her husband, and their 21-year old son were sent to Florida for the long vacation every two years. "This turn-around money is coming off the top of our funds for education and I want to know how much it amounts to," he said forcefully.

Tiffany said he could not estimate "turn-around" money paid but that he would obtain the figure and pass it on at a later date.

The BIA Education Chief also came under attack for his contention saying that non-natives could apply for Mt. Edgecumbe if they desired.

"Since when?" asked one representative.

"It's been the policy for a number of years," Tiffany answered.

Tiffany was then asked if he had not previously said that Mt. Edgecumbe school was integrated because a large number of students were only "one quarter blood."

Tiffany admitted that he had mentioned this as a "factor of integration."

"I have been listening to Mr. Tiffany and I don't believe one word he has said so far," Perdue said, adding that a resolution was also being prepared to request that additional funds for the facility on Japonski Island.

"We don't want our children put on an island, like an Alcatraz," he said.

"We are also proposing a resolution of raising the curriculum of the Mt. Edgecumbe School."

"And, Mr. Chairman, I don't see any reason why it would not be appropriate to submit a resolution that Mr. Tiffany be terminated from the position he is holding and that an Alaskan that knows the problem be recommended," Perdue concluded.

Tiffany, visibly shaken by the statement from Perdue, explained the state and the BIA had worked out the third draft of a program for building of regional high schools and he said the draft would be printed and distributed soon.

Rep. John Sackett, District 15 legislator and the conference representative from Huslia, is president and chaired the conference. Representatives from 25 interior Alaska villages attended.