



Document 'We Can Live with'

"This is now a constitution I can take home and really try to sell to my people. I can now live with this one," Senator Ray Christiansen of Bethel elatedly told the Alaska Federation of Natives delegates in Anchorage last Saturday.

John Borbridge, Jr. of Juneau and Anchorage, said that the discussion on the AFN constitution started out with deep emotions "perhaps with just enough emotion to give it a good start. It simmered down from there and started working. I'm very happy with the results—the way it came out. I am certain we are now united."

John Hope, former Grand President of the Alaska Native Brotherhood of the Southeastern, and who was appointed by the AFN President Emil Notti to chair the

(Continued on page 6)

We Can Live with . . .

(Continued from page 1)

amending constitution committee, said:

"There was the best talent in the constitution committee and I don't think you could ask for better talent. I do think the concept of the constitution should be acceptable to every area because it retains local autonomy."

These were but a few remarks of the native leaders after the amended AFN constitution was passed unanimously by the convention delegates.

From the first day of the annual Alaska Federation of Natives' convention on October 19 in Anchorage, the conferees began the difficult deliberation of amending the statewide group's constitution drawn up last April at a meeting in the same city.

The results were disputed by some areas from the start. Some native leaders charged that the April meeting was not a representative one and the constitution drawn up then was "not acceptable."

APPARENT URGENCY

On the first day of the convention, there was an apparent urgency among the delegates that work on the constitution begin. At 3:00 p.m. that afternoon, Ralph Perdue of Fairbanks requested that it be taken up.

At that point, President Emil Notti dispensed with the agenda to allow the discussion to begin.

Ralph Perdue also took exception to changing of the organization's title last April from the Alaska Federation of Native Associations to Alaska Federation of Natives.

This touched off a hot debate on the convention floor. A motion was made to settle the dispute. Emil Notti then called for a roll call vote and the votes tied at eleven to eleven defeating the move to reinstate the former title.

Prior to the adjournment for the day, President Notti called for representatives from each of the organizations to discuss the constitution the evening of the first day of the meeting at the conference room of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at the Kalua Building of the Tyonek people.

Heated debate resulted at this meeting and the results were inconclusive.

"Things are not going too well," said Byron Mallott of

Yakutat that evening. "Fairbanks area and the North Slope are all but ready to walk out."

On the second day of the conference, Richard Frank of Minto and Fairbanks recommended that the constitution be taken up on the constitution committee level and that this committee when established be allowed to work on the amendments "for the next 30 days."

"I think the conference should establish a committee now and present the draft this evening," Flore Lekanof of Anchorage requested.

This touched off another argument between those who wished to complete the amending at the conference.

Senator Ray Christiansen argued that he was not going back home with a constitution he cannot live with and demanded that amendments be done "now."

Frank Degnan of Unalakleet jumped up from his seat and shouted, "Are we going to stay here and argue? Let's get down to business!"

Degnan drew loud applause from the delegates for his demand.

At this point, Senator Christiansen moved that a constitution committee be formed and a chairman named and get to work "now." The motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE

John Hope, who had been pointing out parliamentary procedures meticulously during the meeting was appointed by President Notti to chair the constitution committee.

Notti then named the following people:

Eben Hopson, Barrow; Rep. Bill Hensley, Kotzebue; Frank Degnan, Unalakleet; Sen. Ray Christiansen, Bethel; Harold Carter, Kodiak; Alice Brown, Kenai; Byron Mallott, Yakutat; Don Wright, first vice president, AFN, Anchorage; Markle Ewan, Glenallen; John Borbridge, Jr., Juneau and Anchorage; Rep. John Sackett, Huslia; and Katie (Egowa) Beals, Fairbanks.

The committee thrashed out amendments for about seven hours and the results were read to the conference by President Notti.

Two minor amendments were made from the floor after which it was put to vote for adoption and the statewide delegation adopted the new constitution unanimously.