

BORBRIDGE ON AFN SHAKEUP

New Chairman of Board Says Wright's Actions Not Instructed by Board

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Staff Writer

Following last week's reshuffling in the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc., John Borbridge, Jr., Tlingit-Haida leader emerged as the new chairman of the board of the statewide organization.

Speaking from Juneau, Borbridge said in an interview Monday that actions by Wright which led to his dismissal were not the outcome of "instructions from the board", as claimed by Wright in Fairbanks.

"The fact of the matter," said Borbridge, "was that the board of directors of AFN, Inc., were not sufficiently involved, nor kept sufficiently informed to act as a board of directors. This became very evident when we reviewed the facts recently in Anchorage."

"Lack of adequate involvement was a consensus of opinion," Borbridge stated, "and not the view of one or two or three people."

Full authority for the operations of AFN, Inc. was to have been vested in the board. Borbridge maintains that "all individuals operating under its direction were to be responsible to

it and had therefore to report to it."

"This meant basically that all program directions and administrations had to reflect the directives that had been established by the board. For example," Borbridge pointed out, "when the board directed that all programs should pay for themselves, then both the president and the comptroller had to comply with this."

Borbridge felt it was important that the board be kept informed at all times about the financial status of all programs.

"We were concerned, first of all, to know precisely where we were, what the status of the operation was, and secondly, to cease immediately, the operation of programs not paying for themselves."

In the opinion of the board, Borbridge said, "This was not done, and there was enough question to warrant our need to make some very definite moves in terms of reorganization."

On the question of the seventh annual convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives, Borbridge said the board of directors of AFN, Inc., "have issued no call for a convention at Wildwood." That call was

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PROFIT ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH — Tanana Chiefs' President John Sackett tells delegates to semi-annual conference that their corporations have a greater burden than IBM, General Mills,

and General Motors. They must give the Athabascan people a better life.

— Photo by FRANK MURPHY

Borbridge on Shakeup..

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issued solely by Wright, he claims, without any instruction from the board.

The board plans to clarify the confusion immediately:

"One, by cancelling this call (Wildwood) as not being anything that the board had directed at all, and then, in a more positive vein, to announce that in its meeting in Anchorage on Sept. 23-25, by formal motion, a convention was called to be held there Oct. 26-28."

"The predecessor organization to the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. was the unincorporated statewide association known at the Alaska Federation of Natives. It was that organization which assumed responsibility for the lobbying activities which culminated in the passage of the Native Land Claims Act."

"It was that same organization that in view of the fact that the Claims Act called for the formation of 12 regional corporations, moved to restructure itself accordingly."

AFN, Inc. formally assumed all of the assets, all of the debts and obligations and responsibilities of its predecessor organization.

"As a consequence," said Borbridge, "all programs, all assets, and all of the things that make an organization viable, have now moved to AFN, Inc. And in my view, it would be unnecessarily confusing were any kind of effort to be made to keep alive the previously unincorporated association."

"If Wright is relying on his presidency of this unincorporated association for his authority (to call the Wildwood convention)," Borbridge said, "I would only comment that the constitution provides that such a call as to both time and site can be made only by the board of directors and they have not chosen to do so."

The new chairman refuted charges about recent elections within AFN, Inc.

"There have been some hints or charges that there was either collusion or that this was all pre-planned and pre-organized. Such was not the case," he said.

"There was never any agreement between or discussion ahead of time by Mr. Hensley, myself, or any other as to who would be serving a statewide role in a restructured, reorganized AFN, Inc."

"And I think," he added, "That we were impressed by the fact that the vote was unanimous, that as of this date, we have not had any formal pro-

test by any regional corporations that this would not serve our best interests."

Borbridge noted that the board acted with a quorum present in Anchorage and issued a formal call during the three day meeting, so that absent members could be there. Wright was present at the final session and "did make several comments to the board."

"I stress this," said the new chairman, "because at that session the board carefully reviewed its actions of the first two days, read the minutes, and moved again to reaffirm all actions previously taken."

"We don't want to have a misunderstanding that we did not invite the fullest discussion of things. It's unfortunate that Mr. Wright chose not to remain for the full meeting."

Borbridge hailed the board's action as "a positive and resolute move to correct a situation and that as we move ahead, we need to resolve several matters of very basic concern to all of us."

"The entire nature of the Alaska Federation of Natives," he said, "has changed from being the spokesman in the Land Claims to being a service-oriented organization whose activities must be complimentary to the regional corporations."

Borbridge said he was "particularly heartened by the willingness of Arctic Slope Native Corporation president, Joe Upicksoun, to serve as vice-chairman of the board."

"Upicksoun's concern," he said, "was that there had been an unnecessary competition between the regional corporations and the statewide AFN, Inc."

"We intend that this shall not happen for the future, but that we shall be able to serve the regionals and through the regionals, we should be able to serve the villages."

"Out of this, we feel that there will be a stronger organization and that communications between the villages and AFN, Inc. will be increased and sharpened considerably."

"I would certainly want to assure all of our constituents in the villages that the main thrust of our activities was to so structure the AFN, that it would serve as an organization that better serves the important people in all these activities—those who are in the villages, and those who are going to be the landowners. And I ask, on behalf of the board, for their support and their understanding as we proceed with the task ahead."