

Don Wright Tells His Side of Story

FAIRBANKS — Following a shakeup of leadership in the AFN, Inc., Don Wright, the deposed president, appeared last week at the Tanana Chiefs Conference in Fairbanks, Sept. 27-29, and addressed a closed session of the executive board of the interior group.

On the second day of the conference, Wright gave the following statement to Tundra Times relating the events which led up to his dismissal as President of AFN, Inc.

"The first meeting of AFN, Inc.," said Wright, "was held on Feb. 9, 1972 at the Captain Cook Hotel in Anchorage. It was attended by Willie Hensley, Roy Ewan, and Flore Lekanof."

"The purpose of the meeting as described in the minutes was to expand the board to 12 members (representing the 12 Native regional corporations of Alaska) and to fill the vacancies."

Subsequently on March 10, the board selection consisted of Roy Ewan, Al Nakak, John Borbridge, Hank Eaton, Cecil Barnes, Joe Upicksoun, Phillip

Guy, Larry Peterson, George Miller, Nels Anderson, Jr., Willie Hensley, and Mike Swetzof in place of Flore Lekanof.

Wright said Lekanof refused to resign, therefore Swetzof was not seated at the meeting.

It was stipulated at that time, said Wright, that the president shall not vote except in the

event of a tie. The president's term of office was to extend to Oct. 1972.

Don Wright was seated as chairman of AFN, Inc. with two dissenting votes: Borbridge and Hensley.

At AFN, Inc.'s next meeting, April 3, said Wright, a bill was

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Wright Defends Self...

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presented by attorney Barry Jackson for \$9000.

"There was no money," said Wright, "to pay that bill."

"There was a motion by Willie Hensley," Wright pointed to a copy of the minutes, "to adopt Mr. Potter as comptroller."

The comptroller was to report to the board of directors only, not to the president or to Harry Carter, Wright maintained.

He then read from the minutes a full description of the comptroller's duties. The comptroller's function was to consist of "providing to the management (of AFN, Inc.): efficient accumulation, recording, and reporting of data measurement of all phases of financial operations, assignments of authority, and responsibility for the prevention of error and fraud."

The wording of the comptroller's duties passed unanimously, according to Wright.

Also at that meeting, he noted that Willie Hensley had moved to support Wildwood. Wright said he was instructed to "go full tilt to get Wildwood in operation."

Nels Anderson, he said, moved that the regions should budget Don Wright and his secretary \$4000 a month.

"They never gave me a nickel."

Wright said he was instructed by the board on June 2 to create the AFN Housing Authority and that he then "hit Wildwood and housing."

At that same meeting in June, chaired by Wright, Charlie Ewan moved to accept Potter's financial report. "Everything," said Wright, "was supposedly in order."

Wright saw his role as that of an administrator of programs.

"The board of directors were to be fully responsible for financial matters. To my dismay," he said, "I find they were not. I brought to the attention of the board that we were having grave difficulties. Work was not getting done, bookkeepers were inaccurate."

Asked if he made these observations in writing, Wright said they were made in individual conversations with board members.

He called a meeting for Aug. 4-5 in Anchorage, at which the board went into closed session. Wright stated that he told them "there was no way we could continue under the present ac-

counting."

At the August meeting, John Sackett moved to terminate Potter as comptroller and to hire a new accountant to clear up the books. In the interim, Wright said he and Carter were authorized to handle the accounting. A later motion stipulated that he alone be responsible for everything.

An accountant was hired from the Boeing Company's accounting division to straighten out the books and program the entire AFN systems on an NCR 400.

"This was done. The books are in excellent shape," said Wright.

The audit was to be completed by Sept. 15, but on Sept. 3, Wright said, "a number of board members called in to change the date of the next meeting to Sept. 23 at Wildwood."

At the instruction of the board Wright said he sent out letters announcing that meeting and that he received return receipt requested confirmations from every single board member.

Therefore he scheduled the Wildwood AFN and RurAL CAP meetings for adjoining days. He was "instructed to go and address the Wildwood RurAL CAP meeting on the subject of working closer to the AFN and to ask that board to answer why RurAL CAP could not be run by AFN."

Said Wright: "Charlie Chong of the Seattle regional offices of RurAL CAP was at Wildwood. Harry Carter is a member of the RurAL CAP board. The officers of AFN were at Wildwood. George Miller was there."

"For some reason unbeknownst to me," said Wright, "John Borbridge called a meeting at the Royal Hotel in Anchorage and willfully and intentionally began to convince board members that they should dump Don Wright."

Wright called the Anchorage meeting a "rump session" and said of those present, "they are the ones that are fiscally irresponsible. They've discredited me. They've lessened, if not nullified, my chances for the State Senate. It's hard to undo a charge like this."

Wright said he has received no notice of his ouster from the board in writing. "I only heard of it through the media."

"I stand ready to answer any charge that's been made through innuendo."