

Alaska Natives on Washington Scene

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Many things are happening today to Alaska's Natives' position on their ages old land rights. The following is a simple and complete description of all the many activities in Congress, Washington and Alaska. We must understand the full picture of what's happening because each past interacts with each other.)

By JIM THOMAS

Congressmen are busy men. Their schedules each day begin early in the morning and run late into the night. They consider small issues of district magnitude to great issues of international importance. Their time does not permit them to think long on one subject. So to keep an issue foremost in the minds of Congressmen, industry and organizations send lobbyists to Washington, D.C.

AFN's men in Washington are its top-most, President Emil Notti and First Vice President John Borbridge, Jr.

ALASKA DELEGATION

The closest men to Alaska's issues are its two Senators Gravel and Stevens and its Congressman Pollock. AFN's men in Washington contact these representatives frequently, asserting and justifying the AFN's position on Native land rights and in turn taking a reading of what Alaska's delegation feels the Congress is planning with the bill at various stages.

COMMITTEES

AFN's bill concerns land and aboriginal claims and compensation, thus the committees of the Congress involved are the subcommittees on Indian Affairs and the full committees on Interior and Insular Affairs. The men who belong to these committees are generally aware of Indian or Native dealings, but not necessarily experts in Native conditions or even native or "Indian" law. Notti and Borbridge visit these men as schedules permit, filling in the information gaps so that these men are fully aware of the Alaska Natives' position on the land rights settlement.

THE CONGRESS

To a Senator from Rhode Island, a state smaller than Alaska's Malespina Glacier, acreage in the millions is hard to envision; to congressmen who come from non-resource poorer states, millions of dollars mean very much. In order to understand Alaska for what it really is and the rights of the Alaska Native, AFN's Washington staff must work very hard demonstrating to these men that Alaska is

unique and that conditions are not the same as these representatives' states.

THE PEOPLE

The men of Congress represent people throughout the United States, Congressmen are responsive and responsible to the people of their various states. So, AFN's Notti and Borbridge go directly to the people by television, radio, mail, and directly through speaking engagements.

Notti and Borbridge keep constant contact with AFN's legal counsel Justice Arthur Goldberg and the Washington office under the direction of former Attorney General Ramsey Clark.

Justice Goldberg and General Clark are well known and respected throughout America. Congress knows they only take cases of great public importance and it is impressed that Justice Goldberg is serving the Native people and their cause for free.

ALASKA

The AFN in Alaska has its headquarters in the Kaloa Building in Anchorage. The Kaloa Building is built and owned by the Tyoneks, a Native group on the Cook Inlet. It shows what

natives can do when given the chance.

There are 15 Natives on the AFN Staff. They handle jobs from coordinating educational information (Showalter Smith) to job training programs (Miles Brandon).

Lately the Anchorage office and other AFN representatives throughout Alaska have been concentrating their efforts on the AFN land claims proposal.