

Willard Bowman Resigns Post On Commission for Rights

During this, a political year, resignations have sometimes been followed by announcements for political candidacy—but, not so, with Willard L. Bowman.

“Unlike others who have resigned,” Bowman jokingly said Tuesday, “I am not resigning to run for a statewide political office.”

Having served as the executive director of the state Human Rights Commission for 6½ years, Bowman looked both to the past and the future of the commission in an interview this week.

He submitted his resignation Jan. 15, effective Feb. 15.

Stating that he had no immediate plans except to take a vacation, the 49-year-old director cited personal reasons for his action.

“I feel that it is time for someone with perhaps fresher and newer ideas to take over the reins of this important commission,” he said in his letter of resignation.

Bowman was quite instrumental in bringing before the public eye in 1965 the denial of

certain civil rights to the American citizens of the Pribilof Islands.

After a visit to St. Paul Island, one of the Pribilof Islands in March of 1965, Bowman called for a further and more complete



WILLARD BOWMAN

review of the conditions in the islands. Subsequently, the governor appointed a five-member commission which recommended in September of 1965 far reaching changes in the islands.

A bill introduced by the late Sen. E.L. Bartlett received Senate approval in 1966 giving the Pribilovians their full rights as citizens.

Bowman described the Pribilof case as one of the most important to come before the commission during his time as director.

“I think that the committee appointed by the governor accomplished quite a bit and the commission is proud of the part that it played in it.”

Looking to the future, Bowman said there are many things coming up that the commission will have to take note of.

He continued to say that the native land claims issue is one of the most important issues that the state will ever face.

“I hate, in fact, deplore this division between Alaskans,” he stressed.

(Continued on page 6)

Bowman Resigns Post

(Continued from page 1)

"I personally feel," he added, "that we should all be in support of the natives on this issue."

Other principal areas of concern in the state are education, and employment, the resigning director said.

"As we go into the oil boom, I am concerned that Alaska natives get a proportionate share of the jobs in preferences to outside hire."

"But," he added, "unless we make a concentrated effort it won't be done."

Bowman cited as an example the fact that Alaskans have known for over a year that pipe welders will be needed and yet there is no training school for pipe welders within the state.

The role of the commission in employment and other areas, Bowman explained, should be as an irritant prodding the state and private industry into doing what the commission feels should be done.

Concerning education, he stressed the need for quality schooling in the bush.

More of the rural children, he explained, should be encouraged to go to college rather than vocational schools.

"I am not so sure that we need any more legislation as far as civil rights is concerned, but rather we need to implement programs to educate people and to get them into the working economy."

Mentioning that he would remain in Anchorage, Bowman emphasized that he would continue on a voluntary basis to be vitally concerned and to speak out on issues.

Ernest Griffin, chairman of the State Commission for Human Rights, said that the commission would begin advertising immediately for a director and hoped to be able to submit the name of the top candidate to Governor Miller for approval by March 15.