

Land Matters, Communication, Jail Injustices, Discussed at Recent Tanana Conference

Mr. Buck of the State Department of Communications then described the means to provide communications from remote villages. His department provides communications for the other State departments, and will provide bush radios for emergencies when no other communication is available for a village.

The main improvement that he could see was for those villages that were on the White Alice military communications system to tie into it. This system is not affected by the atmospheric disturbances that often stop normal radio communications.

For other villages the main improvement will come from gradual progress in radio equipment. He did suggest a universal Alaska bush emergency radio frequency, so that a village could send an emergency call and be sure someone was listening to the frequency used. This idea has long been used by ships at sea.

He added that the radios in the villages were for public service, and can be used to contact commercial airlines to help get the planes into the villages. The radio is supplied at the request of the village, and is generally put under the care of whoever makes the request (village council or individual).

A license to use the radio is available from the Federal government for an application and \$2.00; no test is required. In an actual emergency, anyone can use the radio.

The department will repair the radios if they are sent in to them.

Saturday, Mark Jacobs and Morris Thompson spoke on rural development. One source of development funds was the Neighborhood Youth Corps, which helps communities in work programs which they come up with to help themselves.

Limited funds are available for these projects. These grants are limited to \$10,000 for each community. They pay a maximum salary of \$2.00 an hour, and don't pay for equipment. The projects must benefit the community.

The village must prepare a plan, estimate the man-hours required, and submit them. The NYC then evaluates the plans and, if accepted, will sign an agreement making the grant. The NYC will aid with income tax and social security deductions.

One problem is that the Federal grants do not provide for paying the supervisors. In some areas, the men have to work during the summer, and can't afford to supervise the program.

The only solution at present is to combine the projects with Rural Development projects, which at least allow the supervisors to work on the projects and get paid for that labor.

An explanation was that the idea worked in the big cities, where the major part of the Federal program was located, and that the special rural conditions had not been considered.

"Much accomplishment has come by sacrifices of community leaders," the officials said, adding that they wanted to give as much of the program responsibility as possible to those who would benefit from the programs.

Thompson concluded the presentation by stating that "I've never seen a project where someone was trying to make a personal gain."

Villages interested in rural development were encouraged to contact the Rural Development Agency, Pouch B, Juneau, Alaska.

Byron Mallott and Al Widmark of the Local Affairs Agency dis-

cussed the possibility of the villages incorporating as cities for aiding in their growth. The agency has just started in this field, after having worked for several years on helping the borough governments.

Although a village can handle many Rural Development Agency programs, it may eventually expand to where it needs bonding. Also, the community may need to make and enforce ordinances, or to raise tax revenues for its expenses.

The agency can help the village decide whether it really wants to incorporate. Then it helps handle the incorporation technicalities, and helps the city draft ordinances, set up accounting procedures, organize taxes, and properly use state laws pertaining to cities.

Even if the village does not want to incorporate, the agency can assist with local government problems and in relations with higher government units. It can also provide specialists to help on aid programs.

Ralph Perdue gave a report in which he said the Natives were not getting proper justice in the city courts. He also called welfare a "black mark against the Indian people," and said it had tended to destroy the willingness to work of those people receiving it.

In place of her husband, Mrs. Keith Miller made a brief speech greeting the assembled chiefs at the Saturday meeting.

The Fish and Game Department started off the Saturday afternoon program by asking the villages to set up advisory committees to help the Fish and Game Board prepare its regulations. These regulations are proposed each year, and are published for public comment each spring before the Board meeting.

The committees would help the Natives make proposals and comment on the proposed regulations. They would not prevent an individual from making proposals and comments on his own.

The department suggested the village councils start the boards, adding additional members as interest grew. Boards can contain six to 15 members. However, they cautioned that a board that was too large might not be able to get enough members together for a meeting.

They also said the department could help the committees, but requested that they be allowed to coordinate meeting times when they were to attend, so that they could arrange one trip to cover several meetings.

In response to questions, they said they had only seven agents to cover the area—one for every 10,000 residents—and were often unable to provide adequate enforcement. They added the committees would provide a means to communicate when violations were especially common; in such cases, they could often free an agent to investigate.

On waterfowl, they said that the basic seasons and limits were set by the Federal Government, and the State could only make them more restrictive. They agreed that the ducks left many areas before the season opened, and suggested that the Natives join them in asking for changes in the Federal regulations.

On salmon, they said they tried to allow enough fish to spawn to keep up the population, and then to fairly divide up the remainder among those wanting to catch them. The boards would enable the Natives to give their opinions on whether they thought the division was fair.

On seasons and limits, with beaver as the example, they said they tried to hold the open sea-

sons when furs were at their prime, and to set limits to keep up the population. These limits are sometimes based on scanty information, they admitted.

This year, they have proposed moving the beaver season opening up to Nov. 1 in some areas, as an experiment. Natives commented that the pelts were prime then, and the houses were easier to locate.

The officials also described the qualifications for guiding. They said the tests could be given in the villages when officials visited there, and that the written test could be given orally if the person had trouble reading.

"We're here to do what you want" was an opening statement of BIA officials, who described the programs the Bureau had to aid the Natives.

On land claims, the Bureau acts as an agent for the Native groups. The Natives can also hire their own lawyers to help in the claims.

On Native land allotments, the BIA will help the Natives in their applications. They can also help in the appeals if the allotment is denied.

Many past allotments have been denied and the cases closed, they said. In such cases, the BIA will help prepare a new application, under the new, easier regulations. If the case hasn't been finally closed, they will find out its status so that the Native can continue the appeal.

On welfare, they agreed with many of Perdue's complaints, but said that it was easier to get money for relief than for other programs.

"We're advocates of the same kinds of projects you are, but we don't have the money to put the projects into action," they said, adding that they would appreciate pressure from the Natives on this subject to help make changes.

At present, they are bending regulations to use relief and other funds to help the Natives. They also suggested that Native Welfare Committees aid them in deciding how to distribute the welfare funds.

Dean Buswell of the University of Alaska described the programs available to help the Natives. These include extension courses—such as mining extension and fisheries courses, to train people in modern methods.

The cooperative extension service offers help in agriculture and home economics. It publishes many booklets, most of them free, on such subjects. It also helped reindeer herders develop an accounting system to show if they were making money.

Management and housing experts are available, and they are experimenting with local agents to give help to small regions of the State.

The University is also providing a course in sawmill operation in three villages where the BIA has mills. People from other villages can attend the course.

On campus, the University has the Upward Bound program for high-school students, and courses in Arts and Crafts, Mineral Technician, and Electronic Technician areas to teach the skills to let Alaskans earn good wages.

The BLM came to the meeting as part of an effort to get the public to participate in its decisions, a spokesman said. The proposed Arctic Corridor was discussed.

Officials said the classification was a method to determine the best use of the land, and was being used to keep speculators off the potential right of way. They added that the method could also be used to classify areas for caribou or reindeer grazing, to guarantee the ecologic support

of the villages.

This is "picking out areas of land for what they ought to be used for—including multiple usage," they explained.

They also discussed letters that had been sent to several Native groups asking them to clarify their land claims—or protests, as they are called under present laws. The letters asked the groups to say whether the protest included items other than state selection.

"We recognize the validity of your protests.... We just want to find out what you're protesting against," they said.

The letters came under fire because they said the BLM would presume the action mentioned was not protested against unless the Natives replied in 30 days. They also appeared to refer to specific cases, even though they did not, and were sometimes vague—one describing firewood permits could also allow a major lumber operation.

The BLM agreed, and said the form of the letters would be changed.

Attorney Barry Jackson suggested that the Natives refuse all such applications, unless they decided that the individual case was beneficial to the area. The BLM hesitated at allowing any such case-by-case decision.

The BLM agreed with a suggestion that they combine with the BIA to educate the Natives on filing for Native allotments.

Roscoe Bell of the State Division of Land described the State's land claims suit and Hickel's land proposal. He said the suit was only to get some action on the conflict between the Natives' land rights and the statehood land selection.

He also said the State had not filed intentionally on Native claims—the BLM records had not shown them when the State filed for the land selection.

The Natives agreed that they had been accustomed to having the land through using it, and that they had not expected trouble when the white-man's law came in. Bell said that this did not provide any record of the ownership of the land.

The governor's proposal on the claims, he said, was to grant full title to the village, including room for expansion; to provide control over the ecological zone around the village, and to provide financial compensation for land already taken away.

One point emphasized was that the government had the right to grant clear title, and the only recourse of the Natives, when full title had been granted before the claims, was financial compensation from the government.

In addition to re-electing the previous slate of officers, the conference adopted nine resolutions. These covered:

Changing the opening date of waterfowl—this requires Federal action, as it is controlled by a treaty with Mexico and Canada.

Set up an Alaska emergency radio frequency.

Ask the BIA and BLM to help educate the Natives for filling out land allotment and other request forms.

Asking that bills to settle the land claims problem include both transfer of title and monetary compensation, and opposing the present bill, drafted by the State of Alaska, which involves compensation only.

Asking that the Northway BIA school be condemned and that proper facilities be provided.

Adopting resolutions passed by the Alaska Federation of Native Associations (now Alaska Federation of Natives) in October.

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Conference . . .

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Asking for more equal representation in AFNA (AFN) for Native groups around the state.

Urging the Fish and Game Department to investigate the Yukon salmon fishery, and whether the fishing at the mouth of the river is excessive.

Urging the governor to investigate discrimination against Natives in the state court system, especially in Fairbanks and Anchorage.

Delegates at the meeting were: Paddy Nollner, Galena; Don Hon-
ea, Ruby; Benedict Jones, Koy-
ukuk; Elmer Namook, Nulato;
Plasker Nicolia, Kaltag; Ed
Bergman, Allakaket; George
Attla, Huslia, Ralph Perdue,
Fairbanks, Andrew Isaac, Tana-
cross, Ken Albert, Northway,
Richard Ketzler, Nenana; Peter
John, Minto; Lovine Williams,
Hughes; George Winer, Beaver,
and Alfred Grant, Tanana. Also
attending, as an individual, was
Alfred Starr of Nenana.