

Democrats lift non-support of Caucus

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Four Bush Democrats who bolted party lines in 1981 to join a House majority coalition were told last week they could get support from the party again if they sign an agreement supporting the Democratic Party platform.

The four legislators, Al Adams of Kotzebue, Jack Fuller of Nome, Vern Hurlbert of Sleetmute and Bette Cato of Valdez, were offered the olive branch of peace after the Democratic executive committee met to discuss their fate.

That meeting was prompted by a round of meetings in Ju-

neau two weeks ago between House Democratic leaders and Democratic National Committeeman and Native leader Willie Hensley, according to Dianne Anderson O'Connell.

O'Connell, state committee chairman, said that Hensley,

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State Demos ready to support 'mavericks'

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herself and National Committee woman Peggy Begich discussed the break in the House Democrat ranks and none was happy with the situation.

Hensley met with deposed House Speaker Jim Duncan, as well as other Democratic leaders to discuss the situation that led to the 1981 House coup. The next day O'Connell met with the same Democrats.

The 1981 coup, led by Russ Meekins of Anchorage, saw the Democratic leadership lose its power and, after four days of scrambling, a coalition of Republicans, Libertarians and the

Bush Caucus, take control.

In the time since then, many of the principal players in the coup have not even talked to one another, said O'Connell, who said the party leadership decided that it was time to open communications.

O'Connell said the "peace plan" is simple but is not special to the rebel Democrats.

Under the plan, the four who bolted Legislative party lines will be sent copies of the Democratic platform and resolutions and will be asked to sign a paper of support.

That is nothing more or less than what would be asked of any other Democrat, said

O'Connell.

"In effect we were seeking to build bridges. We offered the olive branch so that people could begin talking to one another and that's already started," said O'Connell.

"Some hadn't talked to one another in a year and they welcomed the opportunity to begin talking with one another. They found there was a whole lot more common ground than they realized," she said.

The peace plan will not include any agreement on political assignments in 1983.

"There will be no discussion of the organization of the House until they reconvene in

January. Those people must make those decisions themselves," she said.

O'Connell responded to questions about the Democrats' interest in rural Alaska by telling the questioner to review the legislative record for the last weeks of the Legislative session.

"You might ask if the coalition worked. The voting pattern over the last few weeks of the session showed that the Democrats voted together.

"I think it's safe to say that the rural issues were being addressed by the Democratic voters — not the House coalition."