

Former Alaska Plan Planner Speaks Out

JUNEAU—The chief architect of the Alaska Plan, which is now under fire, said he'd prefer the federal government stay out of Alaska's minority group participation in the construction industry.

Robert Willard, who now serves as executive director of the Tlingit & Haida Contractor's Association said, "My immediate thoughts are that the feds could have properly funded the Alaska Plan from the beginning, but they did not."

"Current federal statistics are usually three years old," Willard said, "Now, all of a sudden, the feds require information—which, I will admit, has been laggard largely because of lack of federal support." He is referring to the Office of Federal Contracts Compliance complaint that no reports have been received for three years from Alaska.

"I oppose any federal intervention," Willard said, "unless the (federal) government

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can demonstrate a true concern for Alaska's Natives and other minority groups."

Willard said he still contends a federally imposed plan would cause problems among Alaska's diverse groups. "In late 1968, we had asked the U.S. Department of Labor for funding for a Minority (group) Job Bank, in anticipation of current activity.

Willard said, "And, we were refused, now the same department is telling us they can do more."

It was Willard, in 1970, then the executive director of the Alaska Human Rights Commission, who was appointed by then Secretary of the Interior, Walter J. Hickel, to head the formation of the first construction statewide plan for EEO in the country.

"It took 18 months to complete," he said, "mostly because it was the feds who threw roadblocks, not the unions, contractors or Alaska's minority groups."

As an example, Willard said he feels the HUD question is still not settled, as to which department has EEO compliance jurisdiction. "I wish they (the feds) would get together—before OFCC goes on the attack."

As to the Pipeline, in 1968,

during Willard Bowman's administration, the Alaska Human Rights Commission asked for minority group training funds, to gear up Alaskans for the pipeline," Willard said, "of course, we were refused by the same U.S. Department of Labor," he said.

"I do believe that we may have lost sight of what constitutes a minority group person when this EEO business started," the former Rights Director said, "that may be what precipitated OFCC's action." Obviously referring to "Women's Lib" interfering with any minority goals as being included in the "minority" category for reporting.

"I still maintain that we don't need any Washington, D.C. feds telling us how to run our shop, any more than women being included in the unions achieving minority goals," Willard concluded.