

Donald R. Wright

Let's face it: there are major elements within the Alaska Federation of Natives who are trying to dump Don Wright.

Let's take a look at his record.

When he came into office, the best we had was 10.5 million acres.

Certainly his worst enemies cannot contest his major contribution in raising it to 40 million. His friends give him gigantic credit.

Others helped, too, but who among us, for example, can call the White House staff and get an immediate appointment? He can.

Only lately, in spite of these efforts to clip his wings, almost single-handedly, he got Wildwood Base for the Kenaitzes.

Supposing he had real support instead of these snipings, I think his effectiveness would be magnified.

The regions are, of course, autonomous: If some fear him, is that a reasonable reason? What harm can he do the regions? We got the regional concept because he — and others — supported the idea.

Supposing these enemies succeed, what then?

I foresee that Congress will grab the Technical Amendments bill and run roughshod over us. I believe there are some regional leaders who have never heard of the new Aspinall bill (the Senate has one, too).

The Technical Amendments bill is supposed merely to clean up such things as typographical errors.

That bill does much more. For one thing it destroys the "free floating" quality of our "in lieu" selections, requiring them to be compact so we can checkerboard our withdrawal area and requiring them to be as contiguous as near as can be to our villages so we can't get distant land.

The bill does other things as hurtful. But the point is if the AFN becomes a shambles by these continued attacks on Don Wright, the Congress will think that there is no effective organization to hold the Congress accountable.

I think, too, that the Secretary of the Interior won't listen to us as earnestly as we would wish in problems relating to land withdrawals, organizing regional corporations, enrollment, etc., etc.

I hope those who oppose Don Will reconsider, because I think they are hurting themselves and the rest of us.

So be it.

— Frederick Paul