

T-H RE-ELECTS BORBRIDGE

T-H Central Council President Beats Out His Rival in Close Election

By ROGER McPHERSON

PETERSBURG — The 1972 Convention of the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska in Petersburg, Alaska re-elected John Borbridge as President.

Following an Executive Session during which Mr. Ted Denny of Saxman brought a grievance before the Convention, delegates to the Convention re-elected Mr. Borbridge in a close 29 to 35 vote.

Clarence Jackson of Kake captured First Vice-Presidency, Aaron Isaacs, Jr. of Craig, Secretary, and Richard Kito of Petersburg, Treasurer.

Knowledge of Parliamentary procedures characterized the fast moving convention. Proposed constitutional amendments changing the number of district representatives and restricting the power of the Executive Committee to appoint more officers as needed were closely scrutinized by the delegates, and finally defeated.

The "Canadian Question," hinging on seating the Yukon and Masset delegates representing 1054 certified Tlingits and Haidas of Canadian blood was presented to the convention by Steven Hotch of Klukwan.

During discussion of the motion, Richard Stitt of Juneau asked whether the U.S. Govern-

ment programs and Canadian voting were compatible.

The motion to seat the Yukon and Masset delegates was tabled, thereby ending the Canadians' hopes of having 8 votes in Central Council affairs.

Mr. Borbridge told the assembled delegates, "You have disposed of the matter of seating. . . This does not rule out the matter of meaningful negotiations with respect to the future of our Canadian delegates."

Although snow storms held up some delegates, the convention began Wednesday, April 19th, to review the fiscal affairs of the Central Council. John Borbridge had requested Ernst and Ernst, one of the 8 largest Certified Public Accounting firms in the nation, to do a mid-year audit of Central Council finances.

Representatives of the firm presented the report, and an-

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swered questions on fiscal affairs. Following the financial report, Mr. Robert Loesher explained the Turnkey III housing program. Floor plans for two- and three-bedroom houses were displayed. Phase I of the program involving 160 units will soon be built.

A land claims panel with Central Council Attorney Richard Allen; Charles Soller, BIA Assistant Solicitor on Indian Affairs; Central Council 1st Vice President Roger Lang; and Robert Bruce, Acting Director of the Office of Legislative Action for the BIA answered questions from the floor.

Reminding the convention of the "massive job . . . to keep track of 13 to 15,000 stockholders," Mr. Borbridge defined the purpose of the convention, "To gather together to collectively arrive at the wisest possible decisions."

Most delegates' questions concerned problems of Sitka, Juneau, Kodiak, and Kenai land selections and tax status. Also of concern were lands of ten villages located within Tongass National Forest.

The Land Claims Act, it was determined, provided for the withdrawal of nine townships of land and the selection of one township out of the nine withdrawn by the communities of Angoon, Craig, Hoonah, Hydaburg, Kake, Kasaan, Klawock, Klukwan, Saxman, and Yakutat.

Beginning Thursday's meeting with the Annual Report, Mr. Borbridge said,

"The Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska can view the progress of their Central Council during the past year with a genuine sense of pride in the accomplishments of the past and confidence in the future."

Reviewing the \$7.5 million settlement awarded the Tlingit and Haidas for lands lost, Mr. Borbridge told of the special convention called in early March, 1968 to decide on the "grossly inadequate award."

That decision, the fight to be included in the AFN land rights legislation, and the BIA's opposition to the growing role of the Central Council in SE Alaska were background for the present programs of the Central Council.

Turnkey III housing (with 160 units about to be constructed and 250 additional planned for Phase II) was described as "one of the most exciting programs of the year."

"Our goal," Mr. Borbridge said, "is safe, sanitary housing in a healthy environment for all Tlingit and Haida people."

Following the principle of accountability, Mr. Borbridge requested Ernst and Ernst to do a mid-year audit which showed a \$115,000 profit over and above the original judgment award.

"Since the Central Council began 3 and $\frac{3}{4}$ years ago," Mr. Borbridge reported, "We have conducted all programs using earnings on investments."

At a luncheon address, Emil Notti, past President of AFN, warned the delegates:

"We're in a crisis now, though we may not recognize it. If we make mistakes now, they won't show up for several years. We've got to plan carefully . . . We've got to plan now for the future of our children."

Recalling his early battles for land rights in Alaska, Mr. Notti

praised the help of John Borbridge. His appraisal of the present political situation:

"We've got 20% of the vote now. Politicians come to our meetings. There are some Native appointments . . . But when we get down to 5% (of the vote), my experience tells me those conditions won't last."

Roger Lang, 1st Vice President, introduced Gilbert Gunderson, "Super Enumerator," to the afternoon session. As of April 20, 1972, Mr. Gunderson reported 8,838 Natives enrolled by his Juneau office.

Enrollment of Tlingit and Haidas was exceeding the 1970 census by 40 to 45%. Mr. Gunderson predicted that enrollment figures for SE Alaska would exceed 9,500 people.

Joe Wilson, Native Director of the BIA's SE Area Programs reported on his work. Early in 1971, the Central Council replaced the SE Area BIA superintendent with a Native Director so that the Tlingit and Haida people could determine their own affairs.

Despite Federal cut-backs in funding and a freeze on hiring, Mr. Wilson reported the largest Social Services budget for SE Alaska. The total budget for all of his office's programs was estimated at \$1.5 million.

His agency co-ordinated programs in Housing Improvement (89 homes in 1972), training, and education. Noting the success of Native control of BIA programs, Mr. Wilson recommended that the Central Council expand its contracting to include all of the BIA's SE Agency.

Nominations for positions on the Board of the Central Council were announced early Friday. John Borbridge and John Hope, both of Juneau, were the two presidential contenders. The evening voting saw Mr. Borbridge winning 35 to 29.

The morning after elections, while waiting for the convention hall to open, William Paul, Sr. recalled an old story about Raven and Cormorant. "Raven and Cormorant were out fishing," Mr. Paul told his listeners.

"Of course, Raven just sat in the boat while Cormorant went out and got the fish. On the way back, Raven was thinking how he could claim credit for the boat-load of fish. So, Raven asked Cormorant if he could see his tongue. Raven had one of those old-style knives made with a mussel shell. When Cormorant let Raven see his tongue, he got his knife and cut off Cormorant's tongue."

"You know how the cormorant sounds?" Mr. Paul asked. "He makes a sound: lge, lge, lge, lge."

"When they got back to the village, Raven told everyone how he'd gotten the fish. Cormorant got more and more excited, but all he could say was, 'lge, lge,'"

"Raven picked up one of the biggest fish and told the people: 'He's telling you how hard it was for me to get this fish.'"

The Central Council meeting shows how well Tlingit and Haida control of their destiny is progressing. Financial successes as well as housing, education, home improvement, credit and training programs are not just boasts of Raven over a speechless Cormorant.