

# AFN in Debate on Priorities—

## 12 Regional Organizations Discussed

For three days last week the board of the Alaska Federation of Natives debated its priorities as board members encountered the tough problems of what to do when it comes to a crunch and Congress refuses to give the natives all their options.

Chief among the problems is whether the AFN will insist upon 12 regional corporations in the final bill or if the natives will trade the number of corporations for a smaller number with more inclusive powers.

The question of a native investment corporation, holding native capital and preserving it for investment, came under deep discussion as the controls Congress might impose over such a fund raised fears.

High on the list of points to debate was the strategy the AFN delegation should follow in Washington during coming weeks as opportunities for native input into land claims legislation become tighter.

"The stronger the regional corporations are in terms of money and power, the more pressure there will be in Con-

gress for there to be fewer regionals," advised AFN counsel Ken Bass in his report to the board.

"I think our strength is in keeping strong regional corporations," he continued, "not dissipate land claims money on a per capita basis."

AFN counsel and advisors fear that Congressmen not trusting native capabilities, will hedge corporate powers with provisions which require regional corporations to act as funnels to channel native funds into welfare type programs.

In this way, the AFN fears, there will be insufficient money for capital investment and business propositions which could expand the natives' funds base.

Discussion was intense at the meeting over the concept of a statewide investment corporation as outlined in the Senate bill. Many board members expressed fears that such a corporation would be white controlled and tie up native money outside native controlled.

"We must have absolute control by the native people them-

selves," insisted Don Wright about and proposed investment corporation. "What is self-determination if it isn't freedom to manage your own affairs?"

"Do you think the Congress would accept anything less than white control?" They can invest our money and get it out of circulation and then they tie it up and ship it to Tokyo."

The Board agreed to limit any statewide investment corporation to 5 to 10 per cent of the land claims funds.

The AFN Board decided to send one member of each regional group to Washington this week to press for the best set of options open to the native people.

This includes a push for 30 million acres contiguous to villages, 10 million for economic development, 12 strong regional corporations and absolute priority on land selections.

The important thing, Don Wright reminded the board, would be to push hard to lobby the conference committee but not panic if land claims goes on

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# Debate...

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past January.

The AFN Washington delegation includes Don Wright, Charlie Edwardsen of Barrow (ASNA); Al Nakak of Nome (Arctic Native Brotherhood); Nels Anderson, AFN treasurer (Bristol Bay); State Sen. Willie Hensley of Kotzebue (Northwest); Ed Naughton, Kodiak; Mike Swetzof of Anchorage (Aleut League); Christine Yazzi (Copper River); Alice Brown (Chugach); Frances Degnan, secretary of AFN; John Borbridge (Tlingit-Haida); Phillip Guy of Bethel (AVCP); Al Ketzler of Nenana (Tanana Chiefs); and George Miller of Kenai.