

Gambell School Asks Clarification Of School Status

Gambell, Alaska 99742
May 14, 1969

Dr. Clifford Hartman
Commissioner of Education
Pouch F, Alaska Office Bldg.
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Mr. Hartman:

Yesterday the Advisory School Board of the Gambell Day School had a special meeting with Mr. Jim Harper, of the Division of State-operated Schools. At this meeting he presented the points in favor of transferring Gambell BIA School to state operated.

Many of the statements he made were contradictory to other information we have from other sources. (One source is Sen. Bob Blodgett's letter to the Pt. Hope Advisory School Board about the state-operated school at Teller).

From you, as State Commissioner of Education, we would like some points clarified and some satisfactory answers to the following questions.

1. At present our school is staffed with 4 full-time teachers, 2 full-time teachers' aides, 1 full-time maintenance man, 1 janitor and 1 cook, each working 6 hours a day. (Our present enrollment is 89 students, with a projected enrollment in the next five years of about 105 students).

Mr. Harper assured us that under state operation we would maintain all of the present staff, with the addition of another teacher, and a probable increase in the working hours of the part-time employees.

Our question to you is: Will the present staff be maintained, including the teachers' aides, and do you concur with Mr. Harper's statement above?

2. In answer to the question as to how the state will finance the operation of this school, Mr. Harper said that there are federal funds available under a certain law to provide education to people living in federally-impacted areas. Is St. Lawrence Is. considered to be such an area, and do we qualify for such funds? If we do qualify how certain are we that said funds will be forthcoming? What specific clause in the law would assure us that such funds are available to us?

3. Is there a rural, predominantly-native community in Alaska whose state-operated school is so financed? If so, may we have the information so we can contact them and make further inquiry?

4. Assuming that federal funds would finance the cost of maintaining the school, with the island's present status, we should not be short-sighted. When the "native land claims" issue is settled the status of the island will be altered, and we would like to know how the state plans to finance the school when that occurs?

5. Please give us the names of several villages which have, in the past three years, transferred from BIA to state-operated schools, as we have some questions we would like to ask them.

We, as members of this community, would like the answers to these questions before we would be ready to make any decisions. An early reply would be much appreciated.

/s/ Victor Campbell,
President
Gambell Advisory
School Board

cc: Sen. Bob Blodgett
BIA Office, Juneau
BIA Office, Nome
Tundra Times

Letters to the Editor

Questions Organization Lawyers

Box 338
College, Alaska 99701
May 18, 1969

Dear Mr. Rock:

The Anchorage News of Friday 16 May printed an article on the legal consultants and attorneys for the various Alaska native associations and federations. The picture on page one showed some of the lawyers who have been retained to represent the interests of various native organizations.

Are the Alaska natives aware that they have retained attorneys with either personal interests or client interests that could benefit by a claims settlement that may not be the best available to the Indians and Eskimos.

At least one individual whose picture was prominently displayed in a front page article represents not only an Indian organization but also clients with hundreds of thousands of acres of potential leases on the North Slope. This attorney is representing a group of oil promoters who are attempting to gain title to oil lands which the Eskimos claim is theirs. Now exactly who is this representative of one of the native organizations representing? Is he representing his oil clients or his native clients?

There is at least one attorney

retained by a native group who has personal oil interests in lands claimed by the Eskimos. Who does this attorney represent—himself or the natives?

At a recent legislative hearing in Fairbanks related to oil lands on the North Slope, a telegram from Ralph Perdue was read to the assembled gathering. Mr. Perdue said in effect, "you are arguing whether the land belongs to the state or the oil promoters. It does not belong to either of you—it belongs to the Eskimos." One man—the only man the legislators allowed to speak twice—was immediately on his feet to attempt to rationalize and if possible negate Mr. Perdue's statement. This man is an attorney for a native group. Now exactly who is this attorney representing—his native clients, or his white man oil promoter clients?

Recently, the people of Alaska were unable to require their officials to "come clean" and divulge their land and oil holdings. However, the natives of Alaska are paying their attorneys and certainly they—the natives—can demand that their legal representatives disclose what land, oil, and other possibly conflicting interests they either own or represent.

Respectfully,
/s/ George E. Utermohle, Jr.