

Alfred Ketzler Elected New President of Tanana Chiefs

At the annual conference, held last weekend in Fairbanks, the Tanana Chiefs elected Alfred Ketzler as the new president of that organization. He replaces Rep. John Sackett, R-Ruby, who held that position for the past year.

The meeting began last Friday with delegates present from Allakaket, Dot Lake, Galena, Ft.

Yukon, Huslia, Nenana, Nulato, Rampart, Ruby, Tanana, and Venetie.

The two major issues under discussion at the conference were the employment situation and hiring practices on the North Slope, especially involving the rural areas, and settlement of the land claims.

Out of a number of oil companies invited to speak at the conference, the only representative to attend was Mrs. Eggie Harrison, from Atlantic Richfield's Employee Relations Of-

fice.

"Atlantic Richfield is very much aware that the people for the jobs in Alaska are Alaskans," Mrs. Harrison said. "Contrary to popular opinion, Atlantic Richfield has never lost a man who has returned to the cities on his vacation break."

Mrs. Harrison also stated that they felt much of the problem was with the drilling exploration companies, many of which pay

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ALFRED KETZLER

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natives the minimum wage for work performed by non-natives at three times the salary.

Assistant Director of the State Division of Employment Security Earle Costello told the delegates that such conditions do indeed exist, but the state is often powerless to act because the companies do pay the minimum wage scale.

Another problem with hiring practices which was discussed was the replacement of native workers by incoming workers from outside of Alaska. The replacement is often made without prior notification by the seismic companies, it was said.

A committee was appointed to act on behalf of the Tanana Chiefs in negotiating hiring practices with the oil companies.

One member of that committee told the Tundra Times yesterday that it would try to seek an injunction against the companies as a last resort if the dispute could not be resolved in negotiations. Funds are currently being raised for such an injunction.

In discussion of the native land claims settlement, several points were considered in the legislation now before Congress. The Chiefs were concerned about several of the provisions, or lack of provisions.

They were disappointed that the bills have no provision for granting traditional burial ground sites to the Indians. They sought protection for the few sites left which haven't been vandalized or extensively excavated.

Several members of the group indicated that they were unhappy with the idea of a statewide board with overall control of funds granted in the settlement.

They instead proposed that regional and village boards be given more authority and more funds. Most of the delegates felt that there was little assurance that the Commissioner of the proposed Alaska Native Commission would be native, or that his powers could not be checked by the vast majority of Alaska Natives.

One of the strongest objections was the provision which would abolish the majority of Indian Reservations in the state.

The two which would be most greatly affected are the Venetie and Tetlin Reservations.

The Venetie Reservation, which includes Arctic Village, encompasses 1,400,000 acres. The Tetlin Reservation includes 768,000 acres.

Under proposed legislation, all but 23,040 acres would be lost in the settlement. A resolution was presented and passed by the Chiefs which requested that the reservations be retained.

Another resolution which was considered and passed was one which requested Governor Keith H. Miller to provide \$40,000 out of the Governor's Contingency Fund to finance a portion of the Alaska Legal Services budget, matching \$500,000 in federal funds.

It was thought that Alaska Legal Services fulfills an invaluable function in providing legal assistance to the poor of Alaska.

Also under consideration during the two-day conference were the Tanana Chiefs Constitution and the ratification of the AFN Constitution. It was recognized that the major issue before the conference was the settlement of native land claims, which was not explicit in the constitution.

Other than this factor, there were no major changes in the document.

The AFN constitution was never ratified by the Chiefs, and this was a major item on the agenda. Despite rumors that the Chiefs might refuse to ratify the document, or place conditions upon ratification, they accepted the document in a display of unity.

The new president, Alfred Ketzler of Nenana, is traveling this week and meeting with other native leaders. Elected as Executive Vice-President was Larry Peterson, of Ft. Yukon.

With all major business concluded, the conference was adjourned Saturday afternoon. The steering committee, appointed to act as an interim body met Sunday and has decided to pursue investigation and possible legal action on the hiring policies of the North Slope oil and exploration firms.