

House Slashes Bush Programs...

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source of funding.

The new House budget proposes to cut RDA funds from the present \$650,000 to a little over \$400,000, wiping out the administrative portion of the budget and eliminating travel funds to the various, scattered villages which are recipients of the programs.

A spokesman for the Agency said the programs cannot be effectively administered under the new budget and that there are no other programs, either state or federal to replace them.

In the 14 years of its existence, RDA has grown steadily to meet the urgent bush needs for communities with popula-

tions less than 2000 and in most cases, closer to 500 people. It has administered over 1000 grants to more than 200 such communities, as well as administering \$2 million of federal funds in the Neighborhood Youth Corps and Operation Mainstream.

"RDA appears to be going," said Degnan. "Although some say that only the administration sections have been wiped out. In essence, that wipes out the department because if you don't have anyone to administer a program, you don't have a program."

Other programs which the McVeigh Republicans labeled as

rural oriented were also slashed. Examples of this are the National Guard reenlistment bonus, which was drastically cut, recruiting and retention were completely cut, and the food stamp program which was cut by \$488,500 from the governor's request of \$963,800.

"Rural schools were slashed by over a million dollars compared to the on-base State Operated Schools who were increased \$364,400 from the governor's request," Representative Peterson said.

"Although it appears that rural Alaska will take the bulk of the cuts, all of Alaska will suffer. A lower quality of education for rural Alaskans will have a detrimental impact on the cities which will receive these people in later years," Degnan pointed out.

A direct impact on the economy of the state will be the loss of 13 million dollars of food stamp buying power. With over a 50 per cent of the total food stamp program, the state will be forced to give up the programs.

"This will have a chain reaction throughout the state — less food stamp sales, workers laid off, etc. Think it over, McVeigh. Let the 'little fellow' eat, let his papa work, provide a real equal opportunity," said Degnan.

Of vital importance to the consumer is the Department of



BEAUTY CAME IN ALL SIZES — at the festive FNA potlatch. Pretty little Marlo Ludecker of Fairbanks, captivated the crowd in fur-trimmed ponytails and an authentic native dress. Marlo is the daughter of Cloria and Perry Ludecker of Fairbanks.

— Photo by MARGIE BAUMAN

Potent Native Politics...

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mittee and Eskimo Willie Hensley, a Democrat from Kotzebue, buckled down to a House apprenticeship that would later help him unseat state Sen. Bob Blodgett, a non-native.

It was Hensley who pressed the land claims suit of Alaskan natives against the federal government which had never purchased aboriginal title to Alaska. Reading from one of his college research papers, Hensley introduced the issue at a meeting of the Juneau Democratic Club in a cramped hotel basement.

Before his first legislative session was done, he mustered strength to pass a bill promising a state royalty to Indians and Eskimos if the federal government would settle their claims.

That same spring a statewide coalition of natives formed to push a federal settlement through Congress. Outsiders predicted the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) would not survive because it required close cooperation among aborigines who had warred for centuries.

The natives buried their differences, however, and overcame barriers of diversified languages and cultures to gain a billion-dollar Congressional settlement in just five years. In the process AFN proved excellent training ground for a new wave of native leaders.

The potential of this schooling became apparent when Emil Notti, former AFN president, made a surprisingly good showing as a candidate for secretary of state in 1970. Although hampered by a fear of flying, lack of time and money, Notti pulled 12,759 votes.

This was over 2,000 votes more than Charles Sassara of Anchorage who placed third, and only 1,945 votes behind winner Red Boucher. Boucher spent an estimated \$100,000 on his campaign as compared to Notti's \$8,500.

Growing coordination among native politicians was demonstrated during the 1971 legislature with formation of a strong voting bloc of rural legislators. Since statehood there had been a fair number of native legislators.

Frank Peratrovich, a Tlingit Indian, had even served as president of the Senate, but the natives had generally worked in independence of each other.

In contrast, the "Bush Bloc" under the leadership of Rep. Ed Naughton, D-Kodiak, showed a talent for compromise and united solidly on bread and butter issues.

By allying itself with factions from urban areas and would-be statewide candidates, it swung the appointment of George Hohman, D-Bethel, (a white with an Eskimo constituency) as head of the House Finance Committee and carried home so much money that the

legislative appropriation for the last two years has been known as the "Bush Budget".

"Unfortunately, Anchorage and the bush legislators got the grave and Fairbanks got only a few bones," sniffed Rep. John Holm, R-Fairbanks, who represents the state's second largest city. "That is pure blackmail as far as I'm concerned for Rep. Hohman."

Sen. John Butrovich, R-Fairbanks, chairman of the Senate Budget Free Conference Committee, agreed. "The chairman of the House committee is from the bush and he thinks bush. The bush was well taken care of. Well enough so I don't anticipate the bush will have a chairman of either committee for a while."

Speaker of the House Gene Guess, an Anchorage Democrat, had to dicker with the Bush Bloc to secure his leadership position.

"The Bush Caucus has become extremely effective," he observed. "Members show mutual concern for each other's problems but they are extremely selective on areas they want to push as far as a bloc vote, which shows good politics."

"This year they've developed the ability to deal with administrative agencies. The rural legislator has to be more than just a lawmaker. He has to be a liaison between village agencies and the state government, where urbanites can rely on their city representatives."

A reapportionment plan set in action by the state just before this fall's election, wiped out some districts represented by native leaders and pitted several effective Eskimo legislators against one another.

Miraculously the natives emerged still holding nine seats, but some good men were unseated in the process and it's feared that future reapportionment will cut the native delegation.

Even with diminishing membership, however, Rep. Mike Bradner, D-Fairbanks, believes the Bush Bloc will become increasingly effective.

"The rural legislator is forced to be a full-time professional despite the lower wage and he learns more about the system he is dealing with than the urban legislator," Bradner reasons.

"The Anchorage Times keeps urban legislators professing to be part time and they're forced to go running home and earn a wage. (Many native legislators manage to live on legislative salary and make politics a full time job).

"As a result, the rural legislators will know how to get things done better. Knowledgeability and the time they have will outweigh the fact they have less votes."

NEXT WEEK: Lying the urban voters.

Honorary Chief...

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After voting to split the two organizations, the delegates heard a proposal by Ernest Holmberg of McGrath to create a new position over both organizations, that of honorary and traditional chief.

Holmberg said the proposal would "make unity between the two corporations."

"All through this convention," he said, "we have been looking for unity. I want to see a native thing that has been happening for ages and ages past, not with corporations but where we could have a native leader to signify leadership."

He discussed his concept as a triangular structure with the two corporations, Tanana Chiefs and DOYON, Ltd., as equal corners and at the apex of the triangle, the traditional and honorary chief sitting on both boards to contribute the wise leadership of an older leader.

The Conference delegates unanimously elected Andrew Isaac, Tribal Chief of the United Crow Band, to the new position of Honorary Chief of the Athabaskan people.

Andrew, speaking to the delegates, said, "The hardest name is that of 'Chief'."

He reminded them that the Tanana Chiefs represent the idea of Indian law in Alaska.

"You young generation," he said, "have to get money, have to get grants. Long before you were born, we didn't worry about the cold, about the moose, about the trapping."

Andrew was in favor of the restructuring of the two corporations. "It is my thought that they should come together." But he cautioned, "You have to work together, talk together, live together, everybody work together."

"One thing that's for sure," he warned, "be kind to one another. Don't push too hard."

Thus while they geared up two corporate structures for the highly complex game of land selection, federal regulations, multi-million dollar lawsuits, banking and investment, and

resource development, the Tanana Chiefs also returned to a value system that pre-dated all, listening to the wisdom of their older chiefs who have seen many plans rise and fall, come to season and disappear like the snow in spring.

In the three day session, the Conference dealt with many issues, some of which were:

- Village incorporation and land selections
- Native allotments
- Federal revenue sharing for villages
- Boundary disputes with Arctic Slope and Copper River
- Enrollment procedures and deadline
- Subsistence hunting legislation.

FNA Potlatch...

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Robert Charlie, quite a good potlatch, especially considering that the potlatch committee had only six weeks to prepare for the event which attracts hundreds of visitors each year.

Mingling with the crowd this year were U.S. Senators Mike Gravel and Ted Stevens, Emil Notti, president of the Alaska Native Foundation and residents of Caragee North, like Bessie Solomon, who took a long time to get to the gymnasium to watch the dancing because so many people knew her and wanted to shake her hand.

And there was plenty of dancing to watch, from Olga and Oliver Amouak, who have performed Eskimo dances since the potlatch for FNA began, to Leonard Hamilton, who decided not to join just the Haida dancers, but several other groups as well.

Twenty-one-year-old Nita Sheldon of Noorvik, a junior at the University of Alaska doing research on the lost culture of the Kobuk area, was crowned Miss Fairbanks Native Association and accepted the title from last year's queen, Donna Demos-

limited and needs expansion instead, said the Democratic objectors.

"I object to the practice of cutting out people assisting programs first," Degnan stated. "Other examples of this irresponsible budget are the almost complete elimination of funding for the Office of the Commissioner for Economic Development and the Promotion of Economic Enterprises," Rep. Guy charged.

"Even with my limited knowledge of economics," said Guy, "it appears to me that it takes state dollars to stimulate the economy where private enterprise is afraid to take a risk."

"Without money being spent, private enterprise cannot make a profit, people go out of business and end up on welfare. Let's give people the opportunity to work," declared lawmaker Degnan.

The Native Arts and Crafts Program which saw birth under

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ki of Galena.

Margaret Titus of Minto was named "Miss Congeniality and second runner-up, with Rita Tagueak of Chevak as first runner-up.

After the winners were announced the young women were mobbed for a moment by admirers who swarmed in to take their pictures.

Villagers attending the potlatch contributed so much food that there was actually plenty left over afterwards, Charlie said. They also contributed the songs and dances of the Arctic Slope, Interior, Southeastern Alaska and the Navajo Indians far to the south.

By midnight the gymnasium of Ryan Junior High School was quiet again; all but for the retreating footsteps as the visitors departed back to the far reaches of Alaska.

They carried with them the warm memories of good food and good fellowship, the smiles of friends and relatives of many years who gather annually in Fairbanks to be part of the big potlatch.