

DEWLINE MEN THREATEN ESKIMO VILLAGE SLEEP-IN

Claim Company Keeping Non-Native Husbands From Eskimo Wives

By TOM SNAPP
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Forty DEWline employees at Barter Island this week threatened a "sleep-in" at the Eskimo village of Kaktovik in protest to a policy by Federal Electric Corporation which they say discriminates against non-native men with native wives.

And, in another development, Admiral F.D.C. Martin, Ret., vice president of Federal Electric Corp. on a tour of the DEWline has rescinded a regulation which prohibits non-native employees from mingling socially with natives.

Charges that the corporation—contract operators of the DEWline—followed a policy of discrimination first came to public light on October 15.

That day the Alaska Legislative Council, made up of key state legislators, held a routine hearing at Barrow, and were shocked when testimony and documents were presented charging the corporation with discrimination.

In short, the legislators were told that while Eskimo (indigenous) employees of the company were able to spend each night with their wives and families but that non-native men married to native women were fired if they attempted to do so.

The case presented at Barrow revolves around John Brown, a non-native, and his Eskimo wife. Brown presented a letter from his supervisor threatening to fire him if he stayed overnight in Barrow village with his wife and two-month old son.

Brewing Long Time

The threatened "sleep-in" at Barter Island comes from the fact that the discrimination charges have been brewing for a long time underneath the surface and that a number of non-native employees are in a similar position to Brown, that is, they have native wives.

At Barter Island DEW station, Dan Truesdale recently married Lucille Killbear, a native and Mark Sims brought his native wife up from Fairbanks when he began work for Federal Electric.

Under Pressure

Both Truesdale and Sims have been under company pressure. Truesdale and his bride had to wait until Truesdale's vacation, then secretly be married in Fairbanks.

Reportedly, he has been threatened with termination a number of times and is being harassed by the BAR-Main (Barter Island) Station Supervisor Jack Gettis.

4 A.M. Bedchecks

Such "harassment" has reportedly been in the form of constant threats and 4 a.m. bedchecks.

Also at Barter Island a 1 a.m. curfew has been imposed on all

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40 DEWLine Men Threaten to Sleep-In at Barter Island

station employees, except Eskimo workers.

Other BAR-Main employees were so angered by the company's pressure on these two occasions that 40 have threatened a "sleep-in" at the local village of Kaktovik if the company carries through its threat to fire the two married men.

Fire Us All

spokesman for the forty said that "If they fire either or both of them, all forty of us are going down to the village and spend the night, and they'll have to fire all of us. This station can't operate without us."

Sentiment in the villages of Bar-

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row and Kaktovik is reported "highly in favor" of the married men.

Shortly after Tundra Times reported the discrimination case on October 18, Federal Electric Corp., Dewline Project Headquarters in Paramus, New Jersey, sent out a TWX (wire message) canceling a regulation, DO 30-49, dated August 29, 1962 which states in part:

Prohibit Mingling

"It is the company's policy to prohibit the mingling of its employees with local residents and thus prevent an upheaval in the local social structure."

Participation in local social or political affairs is forbidden."

Last Sunday several FEC officials came through POW-Main (Barrow Station) while on a regular inspection trip.

Vice President Confers

Included in the party was Adm. F. B. C. Martin, Ret., Vice-President

of Federal Electric. While there, Martin conferred with POW-Main station chief H. E. Hunton and decided to postpone a decision over the Brown matter until after he and other Federal Electric representatives met with the Alaska congressional delegation in Washington.

It is believed the meeting will not deal solely with the Brown matter but with other subjects as well.

Reached Governor's Office

Last Friday Brown received a telegram from Willard Bowman, chairman of the State Human Rights Commission, stating that Brown's case had reached the Governor's office and would be investigated.

The State Legislative Council, headed by House Speaker Mike Gravel, has become incensed over the testimony at Barrow and had immediately referred the case to the Commission.

Bowman urged Brown not to do anything in the meantime that would invite disciplinary measures from POW-Main Station Chief Hunton.

Few Minutes Late

In the meantime word has been relayed to Federal Electric officials that Brown was a few minutes late for work one day recently.

Monday POW-Main union steward Alvin E. Miller received a telegram from Rep. Ralph Rivers saying that Rivers had conferred with Federal Electric President Bob Chasen by phone and that Rivers had urged Chasen to relax FEC's policy toward whites married to local girls in the arctic.

New Policy

Rivers also reported that "a new policy is being drafted."

Unofficially, the Tundra Times has found out that the new policy being drafted may be detrimental to Eskimo workers in some respects. At present Federal Electric Corporation sells fuel oil to Eskimos at Barter Island and also when it transfers Eskimo workers transports their families and belongings at no cost. Under the new policy, these fringe benefits may be dropped on the theory that providing these benefits only to Eskimo employees would also be discriminatory.

While most of the corporation's "Don't Go Near the Eskimo" policy has been dropped, the policy requiring non-native employees to be on the station at 1 a.m. is still in force.

In Quandry

FEC officials are reportedly in a quandry because they say certain employees are needed in the event of an emergency and that trying to retrieve them from a local village could conceivably result in the difference between life and death in case of an emergency such as an air crash. They say under the present contract they do not employ sufficient back-up personnel to take care of emergencies and must depend upon the men they have.

One of the regulations which has been rescinded reads:

"Non-indigenous employees are forbidden to enter any of the villages, homes or other inhabited places on the Arctic Coast without prior approval of the Director to the Sector Superintendent."