

Consumers should become aware

To the Editor

Several weeks ago there was a paid advertisement in your paper by the Resource Development Council which discussed the Alaska Consumer Advocacy Program (ACAP). We would like to set the record straight by describing our program and discussing the services we provide to consumers throughout the State.

ACAP is a state funded project of the Alaska Public Interest Research Group. Its purpose is to provide representation for consumers before the state regulatory commissions, particularly the Alaska Public Utilities Commission and the Alaska Transportation Commission, on utility and intra-state air transportation issues.

We represent a new and important concept for Alaska, and have only been in business since March of this year. To date, we have been involved in (Anchorage) Municipal Light and Power's request for a rate increase; Anchorage Telephone Utility's request to increase the cost of a pay phone call from 10 cents to 20 cents; the location of a hearing on a General Telephone of Alaska complaint (originally, the hearing was scheduled for Anchorage, but was moved to Bethel

allowing consumers there to voice their concerns); rate increase requests by the Alaska Electric Power and Light (Juneau); Glacier State Telephone Company (Kenai Peninsula); and McGrath Light and Power (McGrath); as well as an investigation of Alaska Aeronautical Industries, Inc., a commuter airline serving the Kenai Peninsula.

We are also trying to facilitate the participation of Alaska Power and Telephone (Tok, etc.) in the Power Production Cost Assistance Program which would decrease the cost of power to consumers.

We currently are involved in several cases, including rate increase and redesign requests by Chugach Electric Association (Anchorage), Matanuska Electric Association (Matanuska Valley), and Golden Valley Electric Association (Fairbanks).

We feel that this program is important and unique in Alaska for two reasons: for our efforts to open avenues of communication between consumers, ourselves, and the commissions on these issues and for our independent review of issues which the commissions address. Historically, the APUC and ATC

have been quite responsive to consumers who contact them, but a relatively small number of contacts are made.

One of the major projects of this program is to organize throughout the state groups of consumers who are interested in being knowledgeable and involved in these issues. These groups, or Consumer Advisory Committees (CACs), are made up of 5-9 people from the community and are designed to work closely with us.

The CACs are responsible for increasing consumer input to the Commissions, and for informing their communities about issues which affect them. Through our work with the CACs and the independent review of documents, we feel that we are helping consumers become involved in issues which deeply affect them, and that as the consumer voice is heard better decisions will be reached.

As a state-funded program, it is our purpose and desire to serve all parts of the state as much as possible. We would encourage who has a concern we can address, or who is simply interested in the program, to contact us.

Deborah Williams
Director

Life is lonely in prison

To the Editor

Guardians of the North, I send you greetings. I am a "Plains" Cree, third generation "U.S." born, but originally from that area of our beautiful Mother Earth now profaned by foreign invaders as South Central "Canada". That is a long way from the tundra and even further from "The Tundra Times" but the issue I am writing about should be as close to your hearts and minds as the Alaskan Native friends it involves are to mine.

All these friends I've met since January, 1978, when I started a 42-year sentence for

being an active member of the American Indian Movement and founding Director of the Native American Taskforce. The nine men I speak of come from five separate parts of Alaska and are Aleut, Athabascan, Inupiat, Yupik, and Siberian Yupik.

This is not a case of "... I never met an Alaskan I didn't like ..." for although these three-plus years have all been in U.S.P. Leavenworth, Kansas and U.S.P. Lompoc, California I've met over 50 Alaskan Natives in that time! During that same period I've yet to meet even one member of my own tribe and

there is a Cree "reservation" in Rocky Boy, Mt.

Federal jurisdiction over "reservations" is how Southern Natives end up in places like this but there are no reservations in Alaska and no Federal jurisdiction over Native People either. So, as grateful as I am for knowing your relations, I wonder why so many share my loneliness. Don't you?

I wonder why an Alaskan Native, who already gets arrested, more often than the non-Natives who judge him, for longer sentences that they do more
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Alaskan Native prisoners get less than others in prison

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time on than non-Native prisoners with the same crime and time, should also get LESS than non-Natives while they are in prison! Less legal service, less access to the courts, less good time and MUCH less family contact.

Don't you wonder too?

I wonder why every Parole Board in North America makes a solid job, community support and family ties the prime consideration for granting early release and not one of my Alaskan

Native friends has had a single visit in many, many years they've been in prison because they are held over 2,000 miles from those jobs, communities and families.

I wonder why the State of

Alaska has mostly non-Native laws, police, D.A.'s, judges and juries to decide who will be prisoners but Alaska State prisoners in Federal custody are mostly Native!

My friends and I can only

wonder, and ask if you do too, but every person who reads this PAYS to keep them here and can demand the answer ... WHY?

Pete Young Buffalo,
AIM & NAT
Lompoc, California