

Village Council Presidents Conference in Bethel



COUNCIL PRESIDENTS VOTE—In what appears to be a unanimous vote by show of hands, the Council Presidents vote on an issue.



SENATOR EXPLAINS—An Eskimo state senator, Ray Christiansen of Bethel, is explaining the Land Claims Task Force proceedings he had attended in Juneau recently to the Council President in Bethel. The Senator told a colleague after the Juneau session, "In some ways, this was more difficult than some of the legislative sessions."

Photos by Betzi Woodman



SHOWS STRAIN—Attorney Clifford Groh is showing strain as he talks to the conference in Bethel recently. Groh told the conferees he must leave the conference on the evening of the day because of the death of his father

in New York. Before he told of the family death, he had meticulously explained the Land Task Force results of the talks to the Council Presidents.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THE TUNDRA TIMES,
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

In re: the Statement of Alaska's Attorney General quoted by the University of Alaska in its Review in Vol. IV No. 6, p. 4.

I wish to comment on the above subject as follows:

The quotation: "Alaska's attorney general has stressed that the Tlingit-Haida decision resulting from a special act of Congress 'whether or not the court in that case misinterpreted the rights CREATED OR RECOGNIZED by that act is immaterial to all other Native claims in Alaska, which will have to stand and fall on their own merits or upon future legislation to be passed by Congress!'"

Categorically, no rights were "created or recognized" by the "special act of Congress." All it did was to give the Court of Claims jurisdiction to try a case against the United States without which the THIA complaint would have suffered the same fate as the Teehiton case.

The issue in the THIA case was this: did the Indians have "Indian title" and did the United States appropriate their land without their consent or compensation.

The value of this case is that it sets a precedent. Whether it does or does not is a matter of proof and so in that respect the attorney general is right. However, he will know if the claims are identical for the Court also said that all of Alaska was at one time occupied by nobody else but natives. Starting from there, what more can any court say but accept the standard of the Mitchell vs. USA case (1832) wherein the Supreme Court laid down the manner in which Indian Title might be extinguished, (1) by treaty, (2) by an authorized sale, or (3) by abandonment.

Sincerely,

William L. Paul, Sr.

Calif. Service

Governor Reagan of California has approved the refunding of the California Rural Legal Assistance program.

Two weeks ago, the governor's office said it would approve the renewal if 15 modifications were made in the program.

However, after the OEO provided additional information about the CRLA program, the Reagan Administration withdrew all of the proposed modifications and said it would not veto the agency's refunding.

CRLA, which has ten regional law offices in rural California, last year obtained income, services and benefits for the poor worth more than \$200 million—more than 100 times the size of its yearly cost of \$1.5 million.

A \$210 million reduction in state-supported medical services for 1.5 million poor and aged was restored through court action as the result of a suit filed by CRLA.

CRLA also obtained a ruling from the state welfare



INTERPRETER—Council Presidents conferences are conducted in both Eskimo and English in Bethel for the benefit of non-natives and natives alike. Many of the village leaders speak very little English and have difficulty understanding it.

department that will bring about \$500,000 a year to 3,000 welfare families.

The ruling has the effect of encouraging people in low paying jobs to work and earn what they can rather than relying solely on welfare.

