

"I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it." — Voltaire

Tundra Times



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Eben Hopson Sees Need for 13th Region

NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH
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December 5, 1972

Mr. Howard Rock, Editor
Tundra Times
P.O. Box 1287
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Dear Howard:

This is reflecting back to your last issue of the paper, wherein, an article enlarged on the attitude of the South Eastern's Sealaska on the formation of a 13th Regional Corporation.

As usual, I do not have any confusing figures to argue with but instead, I wish to make my position known. Perhaps this is the right time to argue that point since there is no B.I.A. in Washington, D.C. now.

Initially, the B.I.A. and the enrollment office in Alaska made no effort to explain to our out of State brothers and sisters the advantages or disadvantages of organizing a 13th Regional Corporation.

Frankly, I refuse to consider those out of State as mere statistics. They are human beings as you and I. Wherever they may be, they have the same rights as anyone else.

When we, in Alaska, argue for the purpose of getting as much land as we can from the Federal Government, based on population, we tend to forget that, while this may be true, their rights and desires should be respected and we should extend ourselves to assist them, and permit them to realize those rights and desires. An improper administration by the enrollment section of the Land Claims Act for those eligible recipients should not in any way impose

on their right to self determination. I think all of us understand that we have the undeniable right and liberty as anyone else in this country to do what is right by our own judgement. I do not think we will fool anyone. If the author of the article in your paper last week, and I were in California, Oregon and Seattle, we would be screaming our heads off for a 13th Regional Corporation.

I think there is a lot to be gained by this action. Any positive action to permit the organization of a 13th Regional Corporation would be welcomed. After all, this is what they want and they are entitled to it. It is not for you and I to tell them otherwise, just because we happen to feel that it will not benefit us directly.

It is not really a loss of land nor money for us because these people, being Alaskans, were already out of the State even before we started our fight for the settlement that we got.

It is not right for us to deny them their wish, now that we have a settlement. We just have to understand that and live with it.

I think the Secretary of the Interior should immediately investigate this situation, and if found to be the wish of the majority of those out of State, permit the organization of a 13th Regional Corporation.

Sincerely yours,
NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH

Eben Hopson
Mayor

cc: Rogers B. Morton,
Secretary of Interior
Morris Thompson,
B.I.A.

Outline of Claims History--

Author Evaluates Caliber of Native Leaders

By THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.
(Copyright 1972 by Thomas Richards, Jr.)

SETTLEMENT — PART SEVEN

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to unavoidable delays, Thomas Richards, Jr.'s series on land claims settlement were delayed.)

OLONGAPO CITY, R.P. — Washington's watering holes look up at 2:00 A.M. Among the best places to satisfy an appetite generated after a night's entertainment are the restaurants of Chinatown. At one such establishment on "H" Street, the food is good but the lighting is grotesque.

Here late one spring evening in 1971, in light turning faces the color of men searching DEW Line radar scopes, Don Wright and I discussed the hardships he endured as president of AFN.

Wright explained some of many defensive tactics which he employed in an attempt to maintain a grip upon the AFN. They included a multitude of job offers spread among those from whom he required assistance.

Wright was an unorthodox leader who further perplexed his observers. He was capable of eloquent statements on behalf of the Native position before Vice-President Agnew, and at the same time capable of alienating the chairman of the House Interior Committee — an unfortunate occurrence which required Congressman Begich to increase his exhaustive pace in order to keep the land claims bill alive during the summer of 1971.

He energetically roamed Capitol Hill and the nation to lobby for the settlement, but

apparently failed to keep the AFN board of directors informed of his actions. Reportedly, Wright offered to forego his salary and live on an expense account, but insisted upon traveling first class and dining in expensive restaurants.

Wright billed himself as a crusader for the rights of Alaska Natives living in modest villages, but spent funds from their organizations to finance an expensive lifestyle totally alien to theirs. When I began this series, I intended on devoting a good portion of it toward commentary on Wright.

But, his constituents evidently became disenchanted with his brand of leadership and caused his replacement. That, in itself, may be sufficient commentary, and there are other leaders deserving of recognition.

For some, it is a profession. To others, it is a duty unavoidably requiring hardships and personal sacrifice. One thing for certain, as the current controversy shows, it is impossible for an Alaska Native to call it quits once he is designated as a leader.

As thankless as the job may seem now, it was much less attractive prior to the settlement, and early in the land battle, Alaska Native leaders could be expected to derive little satisfaction for their labors.

It is a difficult thing to "type" the leaders who emerged to guide the Alaska Native land claims effort. They are as diverse as are the regions of Alaska. However, Native affairs are no more immune to politics than any other field when stakes are high, and two groups general-

ly opposed each other within the Alaska Federation of Natives.

Emil Notti, first president and president emeritus of the AFN is a trained electronics engineer. He has scuttled the years of training required for his profession in order to better serve his people. I count Emil, an Athabaskan, to be among the most sincere and humble men I have ever met. He saw the claims as a possible solution to the severe problems of poverty, disease, and education that have plagued Alaska Natives.

Notti also realized that the injustice present during this country's dealings with American Indians need not be repeated with Alaska Natives. Working closely with him were Native leaders John Borbridge, Willie Hensley, Eben Hopson, Al Ketzler and Flore Lekanof.

Donald R. Wright succeeded Notti as AFN president in 1970. Wright, born in Nenana, was a former construction contractor in Fairbanks and Anchorage. The true solution to the problems of Alaska Natives, thought Wright, would be found in the economic and political power amassed by Natives after the settlement. In his thinking, settlement proceeds would turn Natives into instant corporation executives. Concurring in this approach were Fred Bismark, Harry Carter, Ray Christensen, and George Miller. Rather than planning strategy for the fight on Capitol Hill, Wright often battled Notti over restrictions on the use of the claims land and money. He was a powerhouse in Alaska, and remained a powerhouse when he arrived in Washington.

In Washington, Wright repeatedly forced the issue. Fortunately, the machinery had been well oiled by friends of the Natives in Washington, and the Congress acted favorably.

There were independents among the Native leaders who acted not out of basic philosophies, but largely out of regional interests on nearly every issue. Cecil Barnes, Alice Brown, Frank Degnan, Charles Edwards, Jr., and Joe Upicksoun can be counted among these. Of these, Charlie "Etook" Edwards, from Barrow, is the youngest and the most experienced in the Native claims issue. Edwards began to explore prospects for congressional action in 1966.

He often chastised Native leaders for being too cautious and too modest in their demands. His contacts in Washington and throughout the country continue to amaze me. When traveling anywhere with Charlie, he never failed to discover a good friend in the most obscure places. When the State of Alaska conducted its billion dollar lease sale in September 1969, Edwards led a group of young Natives in protest outside of Anchorage's Sidney Lawrence Auditorium, carrying placards which read, "two billion dollar Native land robbery" and "bad deal at Tom Kelly's Trading Post."

The leaders are all colorful individuals. Among them, they probably have only two things in common. Once you have met a Native leader, you are never to forget him. And, without their timely leadership, there would have been no settlement at all or, at the very least, a belated attempt to do justice to Native land rights on terms grossly unfair to the Native people.

Chiefs Education--

Laughlin Named Head of TCEC

Using all educational aspects to suit the needs of Native people and conforming existing educational systems to Natives are the basic goals named by the new Tanana Chiefs Education Committee.

These and other achievements were the subjects of the first meetings held last Wednesday through Friday. Elected to head the TCEC was Eleanor Laughlin. Other officers are Henry Deacon, vice chairman, Darlene Billings, secretary and Mitch Demientieff, treasurer.

Questions the committee would like people to consider, according to Mrs. Laughlin, whether or not the schools are serving the children's needs, if courses taught in school are designed to insure a sense of independence and identity, if TCC should organize a screening committee for selection of teachers applying for the villages and if a training program for village councilmen is needed.

Various guests participated in the three-day sessions. Included were Dr. Marshall Lind, commissioner of education; Jim Harper, director of the Alaska Boarding Home Program; Bill Vaudrin, Alaska State Operated Schools community liaison representative and David Osterback, SOS school board training program.

Other participants were Frederick Fisher and Clayton McDowall, BIA Educational Specialists; Woody Morrison, statewide project director for

Alaskan Student Higher Education Services; Oscar Kawagley, State Boarding Home Program supervisor; Betty Magnuson, Gaye Billington and Colleen Redman, Fairbanks Boarding Home Program and Emma Widmark, Fairbanks Native Association Education.

The committee was formed and appointed by the delegates during September's TCC convention to establish the stated goals and objectives.

With another meeting tentatively scheduled for January, the education committee hopes to see the formation of an Educational Foundation for TCC region, said Mrs. Laughlin.

Museum to Close On Christmas

The University of Alaska Museum will be closed on Christmas Day.

On Tuesday, December 26, the Museum will resume regular open hours of 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., seven days a week. The Museum will be open New Year's Day.

Kloo Means Fish in Indian

Kloo Lake, on the Alaska Highway, north of Whitehorse, Yukon, was named after the Indian name for "fish".

Christmas Trees--

Effective Fire Safety Needed

The Fire Marshal's Office of the Department of Public Safety suggests the following precautions for effective fire safety in relation to Christmas trees.

Until ready for use, the tree should be stored in a cool place with its base in water.

The tree base should be cut immediately before setting up the tree. This fresh cut helps the tree to absorb water.

The tree should then be placed in a stand which con-

tains water. The water level should be above the cut.

The tree should be kept away from hot air ducts, radiators, the TV set, fireplace and other sources of heat, and where it will not block exits.

Check lighting fixtures for frayed wires, insulation and broken plugs.

As soon as possible after the holiday, the tree should be taken down.