

WRIGHT SAYS AFN STEERING COMMITTEE NOT ORGANIZED

(continued from page 1)

not to fly to Washington, D.C., but rather to take his family on the trip and drive instead. This took considerable time and our president was not available for consultation. The steering committee members were not well organized and as a result the Washington attorneys could not properly prepare for the Senate hearings.

Over the past two years, thanks to the excellent advice and assistance of a Fairbanks attorney, Mr. Barry Jackson (Tanana Chiefs, Fairbanks Native Association and Minto attorney), Mr. Stanley J. McCutcheon and Clifford Groh (Village Council Presidents, Tyonek, Copper Center Chugach Native Association, Shungnak and others, regional attorneys by approved contract) and Mr. Roger Connor (Aleut League attorney), the Alaska Federation of Natives was well organized and each congressional hearing was planned with care and substantial sums of money were spent to insure true and accurate representation of the natives across the entire state. The largest sums of money were contributed by the Native Village of Tyonek.

During the past two years, a close relationship has been maintained between the State of Alaska and the Alaska Federation of Natives to provide a united front and a spirit of cooperation and mutual concern because all natives of Alaska realize their duty and responsibility to their state government and its elected officials. In this light, Morry Thompson, a native assistant to the Governor, had attempted on several occasions to confer with the AFN in preparation of the Washington hearing without success and sometimes with refusal by the steering committee members. Apparently the steering committee has rested the native land claims case to be concluded by the Goldberg firm. This attitude has been met with critical concern by over half of the native leadership in Alaska. The native people demand of the steering committee that communications be upgraded, and that THE NATIVE PEOPLE MAKE ALL POLICY DECISIONS.

The Department of the Interior has also in the past attempted to cooperate its efforts at each of the congressional hearings, and in this respect, Secretary Hickel was anxious to hear the AFN position, before he testified before the Senate committee. He was not given this courtesy by the Washington attorneys or the AFN steering committee.

Amidst the confusion of this preparation for a senate hearing, the State of Alaska authorized the transportation and per diem of six Alaska native representatives and the Interior Department agreed to provide funds for six. This brought the native force to seventeen persons.

President Emil Notti and the steering committee, chose not to include certain members of the board, and the task force who drew up the land claims bills of the past two years, and some regional associations funded their own delegated to this important Senate hearing in D.C. among those who attended were Laura Bergt, Anchorage, Senator Ray Christiansen, Bethel, Harry Carter, Kodiak, Don Wright, Cook Inlet, Representative Carl Moses, Unalakleet, Frank Degnan, Unalakleet, Mary Degnan, Unalakleet and regional attorneys: Stanley McCutcheon, Clifford Groh, Frederick Paul, Roger Connor, and Barry Jackson.

Most all Alaska representatives arrived in Washington a day or two before the hearings, and began inquiry of the plans and means of presenting our testimony to the Senate committee

which had set aside two full days for the hearings. Problems began to develop.

President Notti and Vice President Borbridge had not yet arrived. Other members of the steering committee were reluctant to discuss strategy or positions to be taken by AFN. The Washington attorneys were ill prepared and not clearly informed or instructed as to specific duties.

By late afternoon the day before the hearing the steering committee got together and met with the attorneys from Washington—Mr. Greenfield and Mr. Weinberg. We all wanted to hear the plan because time was short.

We—all area representatives and Alaska attorneys—were excluded from a special session between the steering committee and two Washington attorneys representing Mr. Goldberg. After repeated insistence, we were assembled in a room and Mr. Jay Greenfield read from a rough draft the statement they had prepared for Mr. Goldberg and also one for our President Mr. Emil Notti. We were very disappointed in the approach and lack of organization but we agreed to go along. We were instructed not to present individual testimony—even though we thought it would be helpful.

We were informed that a breakfast briefing would be held in the presence of Mr. Goldberg, but only the steering committee could attend—along with Greenfield and Weinberg.

Feeling began to run high—the first day of hearings concluded. The committee chairman suggested a "free conference" to freely exchange ideas on the following day because informative testimony had not been presented and its committee really had no position to consider as far as the Alaska natives were concerned. Again, we were instructed not to discuss anything because Goldberg would make ALL DECISIONS OF POLICY.

We then met in a special session to discuss the terms of Goldberg's contract with AFN.

The contract was not acceptable, and we asked our attorneys to look it over and make recommendations for our benefit and consideration. Roger Connor brought up the subject of Mr. Weinberg's qualification because of a possible conflict of interest. The attorney controversy began! But it began at the request and specific instruction of regional Alaska native leaders!

I proceeded to Albuquerque, New Mexico to attend a special executive board meeting of the National Congress of American Indians. Special time had been set aside for consideration of the Alaska native land claims position. The NCAI has a substantial influence on the Senators and congressman of 22 states in the U.S. and has pledged support and cooperation to Alaska.

I was very disappointed that I could not report Alaska's position so I explained the past position and discussed the Fitzgerald report. I did the best I could with information available.

On my return to Anchorage I was met by representatives of Tanana Chiefs, Fairbanks Native Association, Cook Inlet Native Association, Bristol Bay Native Association, Chugach Native Association, Tyonek Native Village—through direct contact, and telephone calls. I also found to my surprise that Mr. Goldberg had withdrawn as AFN counsel.

I related my version of the happenings to various leaders and they made inquiry of the steering committee members.

Again, our president Emil Notti was not available because he was driving his family back from D.C. via the Alaska ferry

system. Vice President of AFN John Borbridge, Jr., took command and refused to answer questions of regional leaders. He was very disturbed about the Goldberg withdrawal.

Again I say—it was not our attorneys who were at fault, but rather the Goldberg firm because of a hasty decision to withdraw, sparked by a question of conflict of interest because of the association of attorney Weinberg.

The press, hungry for a story, blew the works at the expense of all Alaska and our local attorneys.

It is time to lay the cards on the table—clear the air and proceed with the vital work of settling Alaska land claims!

The native people in Alaska were never informed of their rights to protest and make claim for their land by government authorities because of communication and transportation difficulty in the past.

Tlingit-Haida Indians, being closer to the United States truly had more opportunity for information and education and as a result are much more aggressive and articulate than Indians and Eskimos of Interior, northern, eastern and western Alaska. The Aleuts—like the Tlingit-Haida are better educated and more articulate than the majority of Alaska's native population, because of direct involvement with Russian and other well educated nationalities—being residents of a milder climate very accessible by water transportation and being wealthy in fish, fur and timber (S.E. Alaska) which for many years have been exploited by greedy business enterprises.

If it were not for Alaska-born attorneys like Stan McCutcheon, Wm. Paul and Frederick Paul, there would be no land claims issue before us today which would endeavor to include all Alaska natives.

Mr. Stanley McCutcheon has represented more Alaska natives in his lifetime in Alaska than any other single attorney in Alaska to the best of my knowledge—cases from drunkenness to murder and manslaughter—many, many of these without compensation. Mr. McCutcheon and his firm successfully represented the village of Tyonek and are held in highest esteem. He refused to accept a contingent fee for his work.

Mr. McCutcheon became a champion of the Alaska Natives. Leaders from across the state journeyed to Anchorage to seek advice from this great Alaska-born attorney concerning the natives' right to make claim and to protest the encroachment of non-natives upon our land.

The pressure was so tremendous from villages seeking assistance that Mr. McCutcheon was instructed by the Native Village of Tyonek to call a state-wide native conference, invite all interested native leaders and attempt to form a federation of natives to protect the legal and political rights of all Alaska natives.

Tyonek financed the entire meeting as a courtesy to all Alaska and because they are determined to assist all Alaska natives in the pursuit of justice. (approximate cost of \$50,000 plus)

The fruits of this meeting are reflected in the Alaska Federation of Natives, the political settlement in the future and the land freeze which temporarily protects our people from encroachment.

As the Alaska Federation of Natives gained strength and developed through trial and error, it became clear to the leadership that unity and mutual respect was the very foundation of success. This resulted in the highest

honor of Alaska's natives to be bestowed up (1) Stan McCutcheon, (2) Cliff Groh, (3) Thomas Pillifant. They were unanimously named as honorary chiefs of the AFN.

Time marched on—a need for funding of AFN. Again the village of Tyonek responded with a loan of \$100,000 plus unlimited aid in xerox copy equipment and other much needed financial assistance free of charge.

Then came the recent development.

Should AFN seek a national figure to aid in our efforts to secure a just and equitable settlement for the benefit of all Alaska? After careful deliberation the unanimous decision was yes.

It came to pass—perhaps by chance, maybe by design—in any event, Roger Connor was appointed to the Alaska State Supreme Court. He represented the Aleut League prior to his appointment. He was required to resign as counsel for the Aleut League.

The firm of Kay, Miller & Libbey became local counsel to replace Justice Connor. Mr. Robert Goldberg, the son of Chief Justice Arthur J. Goldberg, studying for admittance to the Alaska Bar, is an employee of the firm of Kay, Miller, & Libbey. It was not long before the name of A. Goldberg was recommended as chief counsel for the AFN at the recommendation of Mr. Flore Lekanof—Aleut League president. Most Alaska natives had never heard of Mr. Goldberg in spite of his impeccable service and reputation. Questions began to flow from the bush—who is he? What can he do for us? Are there any conflicts of our interest through other clients of this firm? Who will help us to know of this man?

The questions are yet not answered. Instead, we are engaged in a struggle shrouded by accusations, guilt, misquotings, lack of communication and accented by a difficult gross misunderstanding.

My view of the action of our AFN board following a series of heated meetings is as follows:

1. Request Mr. Goldberg to come to Alaska and meet with the AFN board and all regional attorneys for the purpose of negotiating a mutually satisfactory contract.

2. Instruct local attorney Mr. Barry Jackson and Mr. Clifford Groh to draft a land claims position paper which includes the following, to be amended as required:

a. 40,000,000 acres of land to be retained by natives in fee
b. \$500,000,000 plus 2% overriding royalty in perpetuity as compensation for extinguishment of Indian title to remaining lands.

c. Recognition of village, regional and statewide corporation to manage land and money.

3. Meet with Representatives of the state and Governor Miller to coordinate efforts before the House hearings set for June.

4. Meet with representatives of the Department of the Interior on same.

5. Maintain the strength of unity regardless of daily occurrences, but permitting regional attorneys and leaders the freedom of speech and other democratic freedoms.

6. Keep the people informed.

7. Keep the people involved.

8. Keep our regional attorneys active.

COPY TO:
Secretary of Interior Hickel
Governor Keith Miller
Mr. Arthur Goldberg
All Regional Attorneys
All Villages and Regional Associations
All News Media in Alaska

Certificates Available for ATG Members

The Alaska Army National Guard recently issued Alaska Territorial Guard Certificates to the members of that group, which was organized during the Second World War.

Presently, all but 73 of the certificates have been distributed by the Alaska Army National Guard. The certificates, and medals, are being issued to the former members of the ATG which was comprised of some 3000 native Alaskans.

The Guard now wishes to locate the 73 members, or the relatives of deceased members, in order that certificates and medals may be presented.

They are as follows: Robert S. Acheson, Ralph M. Alderson, Axel V. Andreason, Sammie Andrew, Fritz M. Awe, Gust Backstrom, Tom Belanger, Henry J. Bernsten, John Bernsten, Jr., Elmer Blandov, Moses Buzz, Alexander L. Calugan,

Albert B. Cushing, Clyde B. Day, Albert Evan, Joseph Evan, Nick Evan, Nicolai Evan, Edward Endresen, Andrew J. Foster, Charlie Fox, George P. Galovin, Robert Garlow, Robert N. Gilbert, John Gregory, Alston L. Holton, Orage O. Houston,

Lars Indegard, Tony Jensen, Angval Johnson, John Johnson, Albert H. Krone, Fred W. Krone, Norman X. Larwen, Joseph E. Loranger, Peter Mike, Harold J. Mosen, Jimmy Morgan, Nels A. Nelson, Galila Nick, Daniel Nicolai, Nick Nicholai,

Wassillie Nicolai, Joe A. Nicholas, James A. Nashoolook, Beaver Paul, Chuck E. Parks, Allen L. Peterson, Berger O. Ringoen, John L. Robinson, Raymond R. Rogers, Moses Samuelson, Jack Savo, John P. Snow, Samuel H. Snyder,

Julian Stuver, Mike M. Takoka, Nesili Tritekoff, Peter Tunak, Peter Turner, Frank G. Thompson, Alvin Wassilie, Daniel Wassilie, and Carl Windy.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of these members, or relatives of a deceased member, is requested to notify the National Guard, P.O. Box 508, Bethel.

Wolff Becomes Senator Gravel's Press Secretary

Former Alaska newsman Richard Wolff was officially sworn in this week as Press Secretary to U.S. Senator Mike Gravel, according to the Senator's office.

Wolff, 35, is former news editor of the Anchorage Daily News. He left the News in 1967 to become county government reporter for the Tacoma News Tribune, Tacoma, Washington.

While in Alaska, Wolff was active in the Alaska Press Club and the Alaska Sled Dog Racing Association.

"Wolff's experience with government and his knowledge of Alaska will permit him to perform a valuable service for the people of our state," Gravel said.

Wolff replaces Bill Kelley, who has returned to Alaska as Public Affairs Coordinator for the Anchorage Borough School District.

WCA Steps Up Jet Flights

Wien Consolidated B-737 jet schedules between Fairbanks and Anchorage have been stepped up to five southbound and four northbound daily to accommodate the increasing traffic.