

"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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Editorial—

Secretary Hickel's Dismissal - A Setback

As far as human values and resources were concerned, among other things, the Department of the Interior was on the way of coming into its own when Walter J. Hickel was running it. The American Indians throughout the nation, although resisting his appointment with some hostility at first, were to realize a bit later on that Mr. Hickel was not as bad a Secretary as they thought he would be. In spite of himself, Hickel was achieving the original purpose of the department—overseeing the fair life status of America's original people as one important facet of his complex job.

The achievement of this was well underway into becoming a definite reality when he was suddenly removed from his office. Now, things that might have turned out for the good of the Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts are in a state of limbo. There is more than a little hope that the next Secretary will pick up the ball and continue the trend or movement toward doing things under more self-determination by the native people. This was, of course, the stated purpose of President Nixon himself in his special message to Congress on Indians of the country. Secretary Hickel, we believe, was doing an outstanding job in implementing the new approach.

It is also a common knowledge now that Secretary Hickel was planning to extend the land freeze in Alaska from six to nine months until the resolution of the native land claims in the 1971 session of Congress. This and other momentous decisions involving Alaska were directly within the grasp of Secretary Hickel.

Mr. Hickel is a surprising man. We have been fortunate in knowing something of the man and know that his seemingly inflexible position can be breached. This was true of his position on native land question when he first became Governor of Alaska in 1968.

Hickel, then, deeply worried the native leadership on what the leadership thought was the new governor's unreasonable stand on native claims. They began to make public criticism of it. Within a year's period, Gov. Hickel changed his views on the land situation and then actually assisted the Alaska Federation of Natives in establishing its stand on the native land claims bill that contained a request for 40 million acres of land and to which AFN is still adhering.

The nation as a whole knows Hickel's initial stand on conservation. That position worried a great many people. They also, within a year, witnessed a pronounced change in Secretary Hickel. When he was dismissed, much of the nation thought that the man was not such a bad Secretary of the Interior after all.

Walter J. Hickel may not have the finesse some people might like to see in a public figure, but he does have the stuff that makes men tick. If he has a somewhat rough exterior, we have also noted a generous streak of humanity in the man.

Renewal Questioned—

AFN Attorney Contract Questioned

Letter to the Tundra Times: Because the attorney's contract between Mr. Justice Arthur Goldberg and the AFN terminates on Jan. 15, 1971, the Arctic Slope Native Association restates its long standing policy of seeking out and continuing to employ talent in the cause of the Alaska Natives. That policy has been officially stated as, for example, the recommendation by ASNA to the October 1968 Fairbanks AFN convention when ASNA recommended the employment of national counsel

and national public relations firms.

ASNA has employed Keith Anderson Assoc., Innova Inc., Dr. Guy Gordon of the University of Washington school of Business Administration, and has consulted with the Bureau of Community Development of the University of Washington. ASNA has also negotiated with other agencies for additional talent.

This is the way ASNA looks at Mr. Justice Goldberg and former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark. They are able

Reduction of Subsidies on Airlines By CAB Could Make Villages Suffer

Air service to the bush areas of Alaska is only one of many issues at question in an investigation currently being conducted in the State by the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB).

However, to the many villages whose lifeline is the small plane that comes once or twice a week bringing mail, supplies, and passengers that issue is of utmost importance.

At stake is a reduction of federal subsidies now being paid those airlines certified by the CAB to serve the bush.

If the subsidies are cut, village life stands to suffer. Mail deliveries would probably come less frequently and an increase in passenger and freight rates would be almost certain.

The CAB instituted an investigation of air service in Alaska over a year ago. This past summer it held hearings in various cities in Alaska and in Washington, D.C. Interested parties have submitted briefs outlining their positions.

They include: the Bureau of Operating Rights, the Alaska Transportation Commission, the Post Office Department, Alaska Airlines, Wien Consolidated Airlines, Fairbanks Parties, Juneau, and Ketchikan.

All of these briefs are currently under consideration by the CAB examiner F. Merritt Ruhlen and all are to be weighed equally by him. His decision is expected sometime in the next few months and will probably be appealed by one of the interested parties to the CAB.

The board will then examine the briefs and exhibits and make a decision maybe by late summer or early fall of 1971.

A brief look at the positions stated by some of the parties in their briefs as they relate to the bush routes might best explain some of the questions being raised.

BUREAU OF OPERATING RIGHTS—An agency of the CAB, the stand of the BOR has drawn strong opposition from most of the other parties.

The bureau has proposed that the bush operations of Alaska Airlines and Wien be closed out within two years to be replaced by air taxi operators.

The bush routes of the federally-subsidized Alaska and Wien Consolidated Airlines are currently certified by the CAB.

As intrastate carriers, the air taxi operators would not require federal certification to serve the bush but could be regulated by the State. The effect of the proposal would be to leave the bush routes without the benefit of a CAB subsidy.

According to the BOR, the bush points can be better served by air taxi operators regulated

by the State and will receive a quality of service adapted to the local needs from these locally-based operators.

The BOR also recommended that the 25-mile rule allowed airlines in Alaska be dropped. This authority allows the airlines to serve any point within 25 miles of their routes.

ALASKA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION—Contrary to the BOR, the State proposes that Alaska Airlines continue to have the bush service responsibilities for the old Cordova Airlines and Alaska Coastal Systems with which Alaska merged in 1968.

Wien Consolidated would continue to be responsible for the bush routes which it presently serves.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT—The Post Office Department has taken issue with the BOR's contention that State air taxi operators can adequately handle the bush routes now held by Wien and Alaska Airlines.

The postmaster general questioned why millions of dollars should be spent to subsidize scheduled air service at small communities in other states which have good bus service and expressways while there would be no consideration for needs for residents of remote parts of Alaska who have no alternative to air transportation.

If the subsidy is reduced as BOR proposes, the cost of air transportation for passenger, freight shipments, and the Postal Service would be increased and the capacity and frequency of schedules decreased, the department said.

It also opposed the elimination of the 25-mile rule.

"This privilege has been of inestimable value to the Postal Service and others, since fishing camps, Indian villages and logging camps do change location from time to time."

WIEN—Wien has proposed that none of its existing bush services be suspended or terminated. Also, the airlines has contended that the 25-mile rule should be retained and expanded with more flexibility in order to enable it to meet rapidly

changing needs of the area it serves.

Wien asked that its more profitable routes be extended so as to support the less profitable bush services and to reduce its reliance upon subsidy.

ALASKA AIRLINES—Alaska Airlines has proposed that some of its bush routes be recertified.

FAIRBANKS PARTIES—The Fairbanks parties (the Fairbanks North Star Borough, City of Fairbanks, and Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce) contend: "The Bureau of Operating Rights has suggested a remedy for Alaskan 'bush' routes that could easily kill the patient." "Bureau Counsel's proposals tamper with the lifelines of Alaska's rural areas, and must be rejected."

The parties have proposed that no federally certificated carriers be decertified as to any "bush" points.

"Very few small operators," the Fairbanks parties said, "can afford to provide reliable service to most of the small bush points. They have always been carried as a loss by the federally-certified carriers, who are in much better financial position to absorb losses because of the profitability of other routes and because of CAB subsidy."

Eventually the Alaska Transportation Commission may be able to carry the burden of assuring proper service to Alaska's bush.... "But now is not the time." The commission, the parties explained, has been poorly funded by the legislature and does not now have enough staff to do the job.

And "certainly no subsidy is likely to come from the State of Alaska" when the commission has been so poorly funded in the past.

Also, in opposition to the BOR's proposal, the Fairbanks parties called for a continuation of the 25-mile rule. "Population shifts occur frequently within the bush, depending upon where the game is, or where construction projects happen to be."

Flexible air authority, available with the 25-mile rule is needed to provide adequate air service, Fairbanks said.

Firing of Hickel May Effect Job Equality

Anchorage—"The dismissal of Walter J. Hickel as Secretary of the Interior may have an effect on the Alaska Plan for equal Employment Opportunity in the construction industry," said Robert Willard, Executive Director of the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights.

Willard, who was assigned by Hickel to bring together labor organizations, general contractors and minority groups to come up with a plan to provide equal employment opportunity on Federal or Federally-assisted construction, had hoped Hickel would be in Alaska to introduce the plan.

Also, at the time of his firing, Hickel was in the midst of reorganizing his office to bring the office of Equal Opportunity for Alaska out of the Bureau of Land Management and directly under his office. Willard, who proposed this change, feared it might be lost in a new reshuffle.

At least 75% of the work on the Alaska Plan was complete, Willard said, but before being

enacted it must be approved by the Interior Secretary and then the U.S. Department of Labor.

The Human Rights Director cited implications to other industry not affected by the plan. Some companies had approached the Commission to draft plans to replace out of state personnel by resident Alaskans, on a phased basis.

"I'm worried about the Alaska Plan," Willard said. "I don't know how important the Plan is to the acting-Secretary." He added the plan should be completed before a new Secretary is named.

"In terms of its importance and implications in the future of our State, I'd rate it next to settlement of the Native Land Claims."

The Alaska Plan development dates back to September 1969, when the Department of Labor assigned to the Department of the Interior the task of coming up with a voluntary Alaska plan or impose a Philadelphia-type EEO plan.

Frederick Paul
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