

Statement of Philemon Tutiakoff  
Chairman of the Board  
Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association  
Before the Subcommittee on Administrative Law  
and Governmental Relations  
Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.  
June 21, 1984

Statement in Support of H.R. 4322

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Philemon Tutiakoff. I am Chairman of the Board of the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association, the tribal organization of the Aleut people.

I was a teenager living in the village of Unalaska when our people were evacuated on a few hours' notice. Almost all our property was left behind, and we were transported, ultimately, to an abandoned fish cannery at Burnett Inlet on Etolin Island, between Wrangell and Ketchikan in Southeastern Alaska. In the Unalaska/Dutch Harbor area, only the Aleut people were evacuated in this fashion. As a practical matter, the non-Native community had independent means of leaving the theatre of war. So they had the option, more or less, of evacuating themselves or staying behind.

We recognize the decision to relocate the Aleuts was not based upon race prejudice or any other bad motive. We certainly were not considered security risks by anybody in the region. Our ancestors were truly the first Americans. Our

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villages had been home for 8,000 years -- or more. The decision to remove the Aleuts from the Aleutians and the Pribilofs was based upon a desire to reduce the overall number of civilians in the region, and to make way for the troops who needed shelter, hospital facilities, food supplies, and other life-sustaining support. With the Aleuts gone from the region, the military supply lines could serve more effectively the military personnel stationed there. This was all very logical.

As John Kirtland has pointed out, however, the government had a duty to provide reasonable care for the Aleuts under its control, no less than for the troops stationed on the Islands. The failure of that duty, in a word, is the basis for the legislation before your subcommittee this morning.

Mr. Chairman, as Chairman of the Board of APIA, I have had the responsibility for this project, which I inherited from the then Executive Director, Mr. Patrick Pletnikoff, for several years. In general terms, the Commission's findings and recommendations are consistent with our own. While I am an Aleut from one affected village, I speak today for all the affected villages in supporting H.R. 4322, the legislation drafted specifically for the consideration of Congress to implement the Commission's recommendations with respect to the Aleut issues.



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Mr. Chairman, our view is that H.R. 4322 is consistent with traditional private relief legislation approved by Congress in unique and difficult cases for nearly 200 years. The Aleut people were United States citizens and residents of the Territory of Alaska during World War II. Our sons were subject to the Selective Service laws, and more than 50 Aleuts were drafted out of the camps for army service. When our American boys stormed ashore to liberate Attu Island from the Japanese enemy, they were led by Aleut scouts familiar with the territory. In that battle, the Japanese defenders, cut off from all hope of reinforcement or escape, fought to the last man. The Aleuts clearly had the same rights and responsibilities, under the Constitution and laws of the United States, as any other citizens. The government's obligation to them, accordingly, was no less than that extended to any other group of citizens.

The claims before your subcommittee are claims recognized, at least in part, by the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations at the time. As the evidence shows, at President Roosevelt's direction, there was some rehabilitation of the villages and some monetary payment for property losses. Unfortunately, the Commission's record proves that this compensation was grossly inadequate. Alaska was a remote territory. The Aleutians were

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the most remote region of that territory. There was no air service. There was no communications system. There was for most people a substantial language barrier, as English was a second language and spoken by relatively few people at the time. Some villages were more than 1,000 miles from their Territorial Capital, let alone from Washington, D.C.

The paperwork too often simply was not filed or forwarded. There was no practical opportunity to press the case. The people were returned to a subsistence village life, and left for the most part to cope alone with the readjustment problems. They did the best they could -- and time passed.

Mr. Chairman, our counsel has prepared a Memorandum of Law that demonstrates the historic basis for private relief legislation to compensate the Aleuts for the losses they have suffered. The bill before your subcommittee, in our judgment, is consistent in theory and practice with other private relief measures approved over many decades. I ask that this Memorandum be made a part of the subcommittee's record.

As the Commission has recommended, the Aleut people should be compensated in five ways: first, a trust fund should be established for the beneficial use of the Aleuts; second, there should be a per capita payment to each surviving Aleut who was in the camps; third, the village churches damaged or destroyed



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should be restored and rehabilitated; fourth, the World War II debris should be removed from inhabited areas in the region; and fifth, the Island of Attu should be restored as Native land by appropriate conveyance to The Aleut Corporation. Each of those points will be addressed in more detail by other members of our panel.

These are all reasonable recommendations. Each is designed to provide compensation for specific losses sustained, but never redressed until this time.

Under the terms of H.R. 4322, APIA is designated as "Administrator" of two parts of the relief recommended by the Commission. First, APIA is assigned the responsibility to establish a trust in the principal amount of \$5 million for the beneficial use of the Aleut people. A process is established under the bill for designation of trustees to manage this trust, ensuring that each village has a role in determining how the earnings from the trust will be applied, consistent with the Commission's intent. Second, APIA is charged with the responsibility to oversee the rehabilitation and restoration of Aleut churches that were damaged or destroyed, but never fully rehabilitated, in the course of occupation by military forces in World War II.

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There is no question that APIA is fully qualified to administer these programs under the terms and conditions of an Agreement to be negotiated, as provided in H.R. 4322, with the Secretary of Treasury. Over the years, APIA has taken the initiative of addressing the unique social and cultural problems caused by the World War II dislocation. The Association has long experience in administering social service contracts with the Department of Labor, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Health and Human Services, and other Federal and State agencies.

Mr. Chairman, I submit the two most recent annual reports and independent audits on the financial condition of APIA, together with a summary of the program responsibilities of the Association. I ask that these materials be made a part of the subcommittee's record.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my formal presentation. I should now like to introduce Agafon Krukoff, Jr., the President of the Aleut Corporation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.