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**KUAC Radio Forum, Sen. John Butrovich, 10/70**

**Summary created by: Summer Dougherty**

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Moderator: Jerry Reinwand, head of the University of Alaska's journalism department.

The guest of today's show is State Senator John Butrovich. He is a lifelong Alaskan and served in the Territorial Senate from 1944 – 1958 and in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Legislatures. He has seen many changes during his time.

When he was a child, transportation in Fairbanks was all horse-drawn or dogteams. He took his first airplane ride in 1924. Outside of Fairbanks, transportation was again, horsedrawn and dogteams or by water. It took one of Mr. Butrovich's coworkers in the Territorial Legislature two and a half months to get from Nome to Juneau.

When Mr. Butrovich was a youngster and when he first got into the legislature, only a few Native people were engaged in politics, including William Paul. Mr. Butrovich is happy to see more Native people engaged in politics and in positions of political power. Mr. Butrovich says that the brutal truth is that there are mediocre white people in the legislature, whereas for a Native person to serve in the legislature, the Native must be outstanding.

When Alaska went from an age of gold mining to an age of oil and timber production, the budgets increased significantly. The first budget Mr. Butrovich put together as chairman of finance was only \$11 million for two years.

Fishing is one of Alaska's earliest industries. Starting in about 1905, the salmon catch was valued between \$60-200 million. The companies would sell the fish to the lower 48 states and returned nothing in taxes to help rehabilitate the salmon runs. And today, we have more gear fishing the same water for fewer fish.

Mr. Butrovich reckons that he was one of the first republicans to make a fuss about statehood. He was the spokesman for Operation Statehood on a trip to Washington, D.C. Mr. Butrovich disliked the idea that he, having been born in Alaska, might be able to live in Alaska his whole life and not have the opportunity to vote for the president of the United States. He felt that

Alaskans had the disadvantage of federal income tax without having the majority of the advantages that residents of states enjoyed.

Conservationists worry that industrial development and increased population will “gut” Alaska. Senator Butrovich hopes Alaskans will be wise enough to prevent this problem.

The big oil strike at Prudhoe Bay put Alaska in the ranks of rich oil states. Senator Butrovich hopes that this will put the state on firm financial ground for many years to come. He thinks oil companies should pay a “privilege” tax to be able to remove the oil.

Legislators wrestled with the problem of raising the severance tax and passed a sliding scale severance tax. Senator Butrovich thinks that this tax is fair to both Alaska and the oil industry although it is not the tax he had favored. But the sliding scale keeps low-producing wells from being abandoned due to taxes being too high.

During the last primary election race, John Butrovich supported lieutenant governor candidate Brad Phillip over incumbent Robert Ward. Mr. Butrovich says he supported his Senate colleague because when he ran for governor in 1958, his running mate pulled out at the last minute. Mr. Butrovich went down to Anchorage and met Brad Phillips who agreed to run with Mr. Butrovich. Brad Phillips then served 10 years in the Alaska Senate, was president of the Senate, and did a good job. So, Mr. Butrovich felt there wasn't really a choice of who to support. Though his fellow party members probably were displeased by his support of Brad Phillips, Mr. Butrovich said no one said anything to him.

One of the most controversial bills to be passed by the last legislature was the one that increased the pay of Alaskan lawmakers from \$6,000 to \$9,000 and increased expense allowances from \$1,000 to \$4,000.

Mr. Butrovich says he would not have introduced the bill that passed. The bill that came from the House originally increased pay not to \$9,000, but to \$12,000 and increased expenses allowances to \$4,000. In the Senate, Mr. Butrovich and his committee cut the bill to \$9,000 and the expense allowances back to their original \$1,000 before sending the bill back to the House. The House refused to concur in the Senate's amendments, so the bill went to a conference committee in which Senator Butrovich refused to serve. Thus, the final bill emerged.

Mr. Butrovich explains that though it does cost him money to serve in the Legislature, no one forced him to run. He thinks that with the increased pay serving will not be such a financial sacrifice and more people will be able to afford to run if they wish. He thinks it is healthier for the state if people serving all aren't either wealthy or financed by someone who will want to influence them later on, as had been the case before the bill passed.

Currently, the native land claims issue is the number one concern of most Alaskans. Senator Butrovich, like other Alaskans, wants an equitable settlement to be reached. He thinks that, sadly and unfortunately, most of the people who were themselves dispossessed and were really entitled to the land settlement from the United States are dead now. It is the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will reap some benefit. The treatment of Indians and Native people by the U.S. government is a sad chapter in history. He also thinks that there will not be true development in the state of Alaska until the matter is resolved.

Governor Miller has taken a strong stand against any state participation in the land claims settlement, arguing that it is not a state problem but a federal problem. The land claims bill passed by the Senate calls for state participation by leveling a 2% royalty on mineral production, resulting in \$500 million going to the Natives instead of the state. Senator Butrovich says that he has to agree with Governor Miller. Anything, he says, that the state does will be frosting on the cake. If that is what it takes to settle the claim then he is willing for the state to settle it as he does not want to see it drag on for decades. But, personally, he feels it is a federal responsibility that was recognized when the U.S. purchased Alaska from Russia. He feels that most of the things the U.S. government have done for Native people have been a detriment and hindrance instead of an aid.

Last spring a Russian sea captain was seized off Kodiak Island for an oil spill caused by his vessel. Before the state could prosecute, the federal government took him out of the state after he had paid a \$1,500 fine. Many Alaskans were upset by this, including Senator Butrovich.

Mr. Butrovich says he might consider running for governor again but he does not know if the people would consider him a serious candidate because of his being 60 years of age.