

Alaska Statehood Commission
Oral History Project

Leonard King
Bill Schneider
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Haines

Leonard Kind has been involved with logging, mining, and fishing all of his life. He was a strong advocate for statehood because he felt it would rid Alaska of the absentee landlords and policy directions from Washington, D.C. He recalls that before statehood, Alaskans had no say in fisheries, timber, and other resources and they were severely hampered by "red tape."

King was a delegate to the constitutional convention and he wanted above other things to see Alaska achieve self-government. He recalls that a theme of the convention was to simplify government. The boroughs were supposed to help in this direction but, instead, they have over the years expanded government, created more governing bodies, and the costs of government have gone up. At the convention, he was on the Resources Committee. He felt that the work was balanced too far towards mining and not enough emphasis was placed on wildlife. He would have liked to have seen game, wildlife, and fisheries more spelled out at that time.

King feels that the state cannot progress until the land questions are settled. He feels that the federal government has not lived up to its promises to settle the state's land claims, a fact that inhibits progress. He envisioned a Native land claims but the size of the settlement came as a surprise.

King noted that he doesn't feel that Alaska has received the rights that other states enjoy and that people outside of the state don't understand Alaska's problems. For example, he commented on how outsiders often think that all Alaskans are rich. These misconceptions, he believes, will be hard to live down.

In response to a question on how statehood has turned out, he suggested that Alaskans need to take more interest in state government. He related that it is hard to find out what is going on in Juneau and that the large state revenues create a strong temptation for misuse of funds. He feels that legislators need to cool down and show some semblance of order and to be more concerned about the poor image which is being created about Alaskans and their government.

On the issue of apportionment, King voiced concern that the cities get the votes and often the benefits with rural areas suffering. He asks, "Where is the human equation," that is to say, he is concerned about consideration of the needs of rural Alaskans who do not have the voting power of the more populated areas.

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King is for conservation of resources but he states that he is not for locking them up. He is for wise supervision.

On the question of another constitutional convention, he feels that it would be a can of worms, that there would be too many amendments. He points to the problems with California's constitution and notes that there are so many amendments that no one can read it.

King is supportive of the President and Secretary of the Interior's position of giving more control to the states and sees this as a good opportunity for Alaska to run its own affairs. He stresses the importance of Alaskans getting the best people it can into elected offices, creating a good image of the state and gaining the respect of the rest of the United States.

This file is part of the Alaska Statehood Commission Oral History Project.

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