

Publisher's Notes

WHALING AND DEFIANCE OF THE SUBSISTENCE QUOTA

This week in Barrow, Percy Nusunginya and his whaling crew went back out on the ice and brought in an unauthorized whale in defiance of the subsistence quotas set by the International Whaling Commission, and he's not telling anyone exactly why he is doing it.

There is some speculation that Percy may be using this opportunity to somehow promote the issue of "Sovereignty" in behalf of those groups who support the IRA and Tribal Governments. If this is the case, a "new day" may have arrived in the Arctic. To place to priority on political views rather than subsistence during whaling season will be a difficult matter to explain because the subsistence issue is not easily understood to begin with. The "Sovereignty" issue is even more complex for most people.

As a reminder of how important the subsistence quota issue is, we are borrowing part of the report from the Arctic Policy Review of September, 1982 entitled "IWC Establishes Special Procedures for Subsistence Whaling: Commercial Whaling Banned."

Subsistence Whaling was upheld on July 24, 1982, when the vote on the subsistence ban in the full IWC assembly failed to win the necessary majority of three-quarters of those present and voting. In a related action, the IWC established special management procedures for aboriginal subsistence whaling. These actions were taken as a great victory for the Inupiat representatives present, who had sought recognition of the differences between subsistence and commercial whaling since the IWC first attempted to ban all bowhead whaling in 1977.

Attending the Brighton conference with Mayor Brower were Marie Adams, Executive Director of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, and Eben Hopson, Jr., Special Assistant to the Mayor. Mayor Brower issued a statement expressing great relief at the IWC action.

"It would have meant the end of our 10,000-year old culture if the IWC would have banned our traditional hunt," Brower said. The AEWC leading also expressed their sincere appreciation to United States Senator Ted Stevens for helping to prevent the bowhead ban. Stevens had been present on the U.S. delegation to the Brighton conference and had long taken a special interest in protecting the subsistence hunt.

The Inupiat delegation has pleased that their efforts to bring the IWC (and world opinion) to see the difference between subsistence and commercial whaling were successful. "It is the first time IWC scientists have been directed to differentiate between their conclusions regarding commercial whaling and the information pertaining to the aboriginal subsistence whaling," said AEWC Director Marie Adams. "Our people will continue to support research to ensure our whales are protected."

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