

# Tundra Times



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## Editorial Comment—

# The Arctic Borough

Last week, the State Local Boundary Commission approved the Arctic Slope Borough—a huge 56 million acres of Arctic tundra. The great treeless expanse may seem to some as a frigid desert but to the Eskimos, the mighty land means myriads of animals and fish—an area of sustenance that enabled those hardy people to survive through the ages in spite of the killing environment and from which they have learned the art of survival utilizing ingenious means.

The approval of the slope borough may become known in time that it was a move to conserve the natural and unique beauty of the Alaskan Arctic. And the overseers of this huge area will be the Eskimos themselves. This is the way it should be because the Eskimos of the area have exhaustive knowledge of the land from which they wrest their livelihood. Their knowledge of the animals, which they constantly tap for sustenance, can be classed as second to none. These can be the basic requirements in conserving the beauty of the Arctic lands and the animals in them.

The creation of the slope borough will give the Eskimos the right to tax property, set up educational systems and planning and zoning. Once the borough begins operating, it would also have other powers on such things as health, fire protection, sewer and water, police and taxation on sales.

One of the first moves the Arctic Slope Borough might make would be to pave the way for the establishment of a high school system. The people there have always bemoaned the fact that they have to send their high school youngsters to places thousands of miles away from home. Since this is a much desired educational need, it could become one of the first priorities.

The Arctic borough also stands to have a considerable tax base including the oil interests in the Prudhoe Bay area. We believe, however, that the authorities of the new borough will not be greedy but would set tax levels at reasonable rates. They will, of course, need adequate revenues to run the borough.

We do certainly believe that the approval of the Arctic Slope Borough is an important move toward preservation and protection of the Arctic lands and that the Eskimos of the area will prove to be excellent overseers and help to keep injury to the terrain and ecology to a minimum.