

# "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!"

By Sylvia M. Carlsson

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Like most Anchorage-ites, I'm usually immune to strange creatures wandering about our streets, sometimes ranting and raving about various and sundry causes. Metropolitan Anchorage has its share of nut cases — you name it, we've got it, even at high noon in front of the Plaza.

The other day, I was meandering over to the Short Stop for a bite when I spotted this natty professor type on the street corner shouting about Native this and Native that. I joined the other curious passers-by, and I thought he was saying "The sky is falling,

the sky is falling!"

I figured, oh well, just another Chicken-Little freak, but the guy next to me said, "No, no, listen, he's saying, 'Watch out, the Inupiat are talking, the Inupiat are talking!'" Then he added, "That's Ole Art, you know, he's a columnist for some local newspaper, he's usually socking it to the blacks, women's rights, unions, or what have you." I'll have to confess I was a little intrigued by this Art fellow's eloquence. He sounded like an intellectual (in an arrogant sort of way) so I stuck around to hear what else he had to say.

When Ole Art saw that he had an audience, he held forth

with an astounding tale of Inupiat communicating across international boundaries and gathering in Canada for an Inuit Circumpolar Conference in what he described as "a remarkable exercise." He hinted darkly about an "underlying motif in the conference" and told us the Inupiat were openly discussing language and culture and self-government and even sovereignty, for heavens sake. He suggested that there might be some awful secret plots of subversion going on over there.

Then . . . he seemed to lose control and started babbling about whales and Hitler and a free society interspersed with complaints about how the USSR wouldn't let their Siberian Yupiks attend the ICC, of all things. Then he quietly started tossing numbers all over the place, mixed up with some impressive sounding scientific

data, which simply fascinated me.

I finally made out that he was concerned about the bow-head whale and how somebody was letting the Eskimos set quotas or something. I thought to myself, "Sweet mother, this guy sounds like he knows that he's talking about." But someone piped up, "Ole Art can't even count anymore," and it was so, his numbers of quotas were all out of sync.

All of a sudden he started yelling about racist collectivism and the Alaska Native Claims Act, which he got all garbled up with Articles of Confederation and freedom of individuals, endangered species, then back to Inuit ethnicity. He got a little wild-eyed when he started muttering about "50 years of our own expanding central government power." I was a little hard pressed to follow his argument when he finally

ended his diatribe with a scary pronouncement that "the Inuit sovereignty issue is rapidly becoming a minefield." Amazing sophistry!

Well, I looked around me to check the reactions of others. There were some with pointy-toed shoes and big hats who were nodding sagely in agreement, while some with a definite Sourdough air about them were simply staring in round-eyed astonishment. Others were rushing off in obvious alarm, probably convinced that Eskimo terrorists were lurking in the bush somewhere.

I pondered this whole episode a moment, then decided to visit the president of our local banking establishment, who happens to be Inupiat. He's been known to sort out puzzling things like this. (Incidentally, I still think Ole Art was saying, "The sky is falling, the sky is falling!")