

letters

Thanks

Golden Tower, Apt. No. 318
Fairbanks, AK 99701
March 11, 1979

To: Our Dear Friends and Relatives from the villages and Fairbanks:

This letter is in great appreciation for all the wonderful things our friends and other people we hardly know have done for us during Walter's illness.

We have personally thanked the people we know who have continuously given us everything from food, household items, finances, their time and other things.

There are those who have given without any name attached and to you our family want to thank with all our appreciation.

Thank God for wonderful people for it has really made things so much easier.

God bless each and everyone,
Walter & Judy Woods
and family

Antiquities Act

Association of Interior Eskimos
P.O. Box 5329
North Pole, AK 99705
February 9, 1979

Mr. Clem Tillion
President of the State Senate

Mr. Terry Gardiner
Speaker of the State House
Pouch V
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Gentlemen:

First in regards to the Antiquities Act. In the late 1970's I wrote an editorial in the Tundra Times warning of the U.S. Department of the Interior's plan of taking 80 million acres vs 40 million and I felt that they would soon take 120 million plus, nobody seemed to care or take heed. I am 100 per cent opposed to the imposing of the act upon Alaska and its residents and feel strongly that the President should take a long hard look at himself and his concern about the rights of people in Foreign Countries and then his actions and the impact upon Alaskans and their life style by invoking the Antiquities Act, and therefore depriving us of our right to be heard. Of course on the other hand, you should realize "if there is no peril in the fight, then there is no glory in the triumph."

What bothers me most is the fact that here in Alaska people are hollering about Alaskans Unite. Well I remember not too long ago the Natives of the Interior and the North Slope wanted the Haul Road kept closed to the general public, what a commotion was raised by the other side who said that the Haul Road belonged to the tax payers and all the people of Alaska and the road should be opened regardless of the Natives objections. My, what a change of attitude when the shoe is on the other foot. Now the non-Native and non-Indian knows how it feels to have their land taken without due process.

If Alaskans are to unite then let them support the request

letters

and feelings of the Natives of the Interior and the North Slope to close the Haul Road which will protect their life style and traditional hunting and fishing areas from encroachment of civilization and trespass. The road goes no where in particular and actually only serves the interest and trespass of the oil companies at our expense.

I sent letters to all 60 legislators last year in this regard, and the fact that 1/2 mile of the haul road had been unlawfully constructed upon a Native allotment which is certified and recorded owned by Arctic John Etalook, an 85-year-old Eskimo whose forefathers had used and lived upon the land before the coming of the Europeans.

It appears even with this knowledge the legislators introduced bills and now are re-introducing bills to open the Haul Road without regards to the rights of Arctic John. So it once again becomes a one-sided affair, the State wanting to disregard an individual's rights to his land and then screaming about what the Federal Government wants to do and is doing now, to all Alaskans.

Taking over the maintenance and repair of the Haul Road was a blunder and the so called land experts were not doing their home work an allowing themselves to be bamboozled by Alyeska. It seemed stupid to me to take ownership of anything let alone land without proper papers to show ownership especially when it in Indian land held in trust by the U.S. Government via the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Are the rights of the State of Alaska made to protect everyone on an equal basis or are they for a select few individuals and entities?

The state had the right to refuse acceptance of the road when they become aware of a problem with right ways on and along the road if in fact they took the time (and were concerned) to read my letter giving them fair warning about the problem. How can you say that the Federal Government is the villain and seek monies to thwart the Antiquities Act and protect the rights of Alaskans and turn around and do the same to another human being.

When the legislature as a whole ignores the rights of one person who is Native and who had clear title to the only private piece of land north on the Haul Road as being for the good of everyone and still maintain that the Federal Government and the President is doing an injustice to the people of Alaska then I think its time to stand back and take a long look at yourselves and then reappraise your values and concerns, for as it stands now there seems an unbalance in equality and justice.

I shall end with this final note on the Antiquities Act and laws such as this. It was once said by one who was far more wiser than I. "A law that is forced

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letters

upon the people that may be habitually and openly violated is in fact a fightful demoralizer of society."

Sincerely,
John L. Heffle Sr.
President, Association of Interior Eskimos

cc: Tundra Times

Bush schools

March 13, 1979

Dear Editor:

I have been reading articles relating to the report which states that unless "widespread supporting actions are taken many small high schools are doomed to failure, along with a whole generation of young people..." Although this thesis has met widespread criticism from legislators to state board members I am in agreement with this finding.

Senator Frank Ferguson has called the report "poorly done" and that "someone" has to answer for how the "bad" parts got into the report. This questioning of the report and not the problems identified by the report leads me to question whether the state legislature could seriously address the very real problems existing in rural education. Senator Ferguson rather than being concerned about "bad" reports which reflects on both the legislature and the Administration should face the truth in the findings and react in a positive and constructive manner. To crucify the bearers of bad news hardly improves rural education.

Jan Hohman, State Board of Education member from Nome has stated that one can't put dollars and cents figures on the damage done by the Daily News story on the report seems to me is asking the wrong question. The question should be what damage has been done to students in rural high schools already. The state board and the Administration rather than worrying about bad publicity should be concerned about the findings of the report and if indeed a whole generation of young people were in jeopardy.

I have always been supportive of the construction of schools in villages and I am in support of the goals of the "Hootch" case. But I oppose the construction of high schools in every village for what I consider to be very good reasons. Let me enumerate:

1. In most small villages the number of students does not allow for more than one or two teachers. The question is can one or two teachers teach everything? Do they have the time to adequately prepare for the many classes they must teach? Are they qualified to teach all disciplines? Another concern with regards to teachers is the question of whether or not they are even culturally sensitive to adequately address the many other needs of their students.

2. The cost to the state for the construction and maintenance of high schools in every village is prohibitive. In an age where limitation of resources is finally being recognized, this over-correction of a very real problem will strain not only the monetary resources of the (See OUR READERS, Page 10)

● Our readers write to us

(Continued from Page Two)

state but its professional human resources as well. Someday there will be little money to run all schools on top funding and in our effort to staff these many high schools the quality of teachers will reach a low point. There is a limit.

3. Construction of high schools in every village is poor planning. Some day the state when faced with financial problems will mandate boroughs in the existing unorganized borough thereby putting some of the financial burden on village people. The rural boroughs without adequate taxable revenues and properties will close many schools. For village leadership to pay no heed to this very real possibility is folly. For the State Legislature and the Dept. of Education to ignore this possibility shows a political naivete of appalling magnitude.

4. The existing court mandated wholesale construction of high schools in villages is educationally unsound for one glaring reason. The court interpreted the letter and the sense of state laws not the educational needs

of rural Alaskan youngsters. It is true it heard the arguments of the plaintiffs addressing a glaring injustice to Alaska native children, but it may have overstepped its bounds as the court is not an educational planning agency. In short the court decision did not allow for planning. There was none. The state got a spanking and like an errant child hap-hazardly attempted to clean up a mess. The resultant mess needs no explanation.

Although Commissioner Lind sees "some very, very good things going on" he should also see the very, very bad things going on as well. For the Commissioner to ignore these (the very, very bad things) in the furtherance of the injustice the Hootch case attempted to correct.

What to do? The Legislature should create a commission composed of village leaders and educators to review the construction of high schools in rural Alaska. The commission to address the concerns of the U of A report and the concerns I have outlined above, the commission should then report to the legislature with recommendations. The cost of such a commission will be peanuts compared to the cost the state, the village, and the student, will have to pay if this stampede to construct high schools continues unimpeded. This does not mean however that better elementary schools should not be constructed. Villages still need these.

Sincerely,
Harold Napoleon