

Slope Sets for Borough Election—

Borough Chairman Candidates Campaign

By ROGER McPHERSON

A charter flight of lawyers, Arctic Slope Native Association Board of Directors, and Barrow people visited all villages within the proposed North Slope Borough except Point Hope.

On the first stop, villagers of Wainwright gathered to hear ASNA plans, information on lawsuits, and speeches by candidates for the borough offices of Chairman, Assemblymen, and School Board.

"When I speak of our land," Joe Upicksoun told the meeting,

"I speak of the Arctic Slope region which is composed of five active villages."

The 56.5 million acre North Slope Borough will make it lar-

(Continued on Page 6)

Borough Election...

(Continued from page 1)

ger than 40 of the 50 states, and the largest local government in the world.

Oil companies have attempted to block formation of the borough. However, in a May decision, the Anchorage courts ruled that the June 20th elections should be held.

The oil companies have brought forth new claims since that decision, and a new hearing is scheduled before the election. ASNA is asking that the decision be thrown out of court.

David Getches of the American Native Legal Fund outlined the advantages of having a borough: "A borough can plan the area to grow the way they (the residents) want it to; they can control their schools and build water and sewer systems."

Campaign speeches for Borough Chairman and Borough Assemblymen emphasized the need for local control. Expressing everyone's feelings, Joe Upicksoun said:

"I feel through education, we can have a beautiful society. I would like to see all Inupiat Eskimos go to school here in the Arctic Slope region."

About half of the candidates for Borough positions were young people, reflecting an increased interest by the young in government.

Reporting on the progress of the Regional Corporation, Mr. Fred Paul, ASNA lawyer, explained that by the end of June, ASNA Limited will have articles of incorporation and a plan for spending \$500,000 which Congress has appropriated for each regional corporation.

The board of directors will be each of the mayors from the five North Slope villages, plus the six-man executive board of ASNA.

With patience, the Wainwright people listened to the legal suits going on in Washington, D.C., and in Anchorage. For people who have settled the North Slope, harvested its resources, and adapted to new developments by oil companies, they showed their ability to be calm in the midst of battle, and humorous even when planning their future.

Following the meeting, the question was not whether there would be a North Slope Borough, but which of the many strong leaders would be elected chairman of the enormous North Slope area.

A day later, the charter flight visited Anaktuvuk Pass. Rain beat down on the school house while Eddie Hopson translated information on oil spillage, regional corporation, village corporation, and land withdrawals into Inupiat.

David Getches explained the concept of borough government.

"As you know, big companies are coming into Alaska. As they come in, it will be important to plan how the area will grow. The borough will also be able to set up zoning. As the villages

grow, it will be important to be able to say: 'Here there will be a church; here housing.' It will also be important for you to be able to protect your way of life.

"If this is not done, the oil companies . . . can disrupt your hunting and fishing. Another thing you can do as a borough is to build a good educational system. For the first time you will have control of your schools throughout the North Slope.

"For the first time your children will be able to go to high school on the North Slope. You can do this because you will have power to govern your own affairs, which you do not have now. By coming together with all the people of the North Slope, you will be able to speak with a strong voice."

On the same ballot, North Slope people will vote for Borough Chairman. Eben Hopson, one of the strong candidates for that office, left his job as Special Assistant to the Governor to run.

In a short election speech, Mr. Hopson said he could work with confidence because of his experience in the legislature.

Peter Tagarook from Wainwright, running for the same office, told the people that he knows the living conditions of the Native people and that is why he is running. No candidates from either Point Hope or Anaktuvuk Pass were on the ballot because of poor communications between the villages.

However, spaces were left on the ballot for write-in candidates Charlie Edwardson, Jr. who was not listed on the ballot will be a write-in candidate for the office of Borough Chairman.

Following the lengthy meeting, the charter took off in a rain shower and headed for Barter Island, where Kaktovik, the farthest east village in the proposed borough, is located. Basic issues were again presented to the villagers.

By this time, Mr. Fred Paul, ASNA lawyer, was taking throat lozenges to enable him to speak. Eddie Hopson continued translating for the speakers, and several tape recorders were in use.

The meeting ended late that night with campaign speeches. Expressing the feelings of everyone, John Nusunginya, a candidate for Borough Assembly and the State Legislature, said:

"I want to see a good borough in which each and every one of us could be of some help."

Education and experience have brought Inupiat Eskimos of the Arctic Slope to this final stage in their development — local control by the people themselves. In the two or three years needed to make a North Slope Borough a reality, the Eskimo people have shown their ability and willingness to assume responsibility for their land in an orderly and democratic manner.