

Eskimo Mayor Answers Jane Pender

(Because of the controversial nature of the following letter (the original of which was directed to the Executive Editor of the Anchorage Daily News), we would welcome replies and comments from other persons familiar with the matters discussed, including Mrs. Pender. — Ed.)

KIKIKTUGRUK AREA
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION, INC.

June 2, 1972

Mr. Stan Abbott
Executive Editor
2nd & Post Road
Anchorage, Alaska

Dear Mr. Abbott:

I would like very much to comment on an article written in your paper by Jane Pender titled, "Eskimo vs. White."

First off, she mentioned my office, RurAL CAP, as being off limits to Whites. This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. All the agency people in town are white. Because of the nature of my job, I must work very close with them. I have never felt any animosity between them and myself or vice versa. Our Headstart programs, an entity of RurAL CAP, has white people as well as Eskimo people working for it. The coordinator of the program works here in my office and he is white. Many of the students that make up the program are white. Our Parent Child Center, also an entity of RurAL CAP, has the same situation as Head Start. I, as well as being Mayor of Kotzebue, would like to know what bar it is she accuses of being racist towards whites. After all, it is the white people who own the bars and if it is true, that puts white against white.

She (Jane Pender) mentioned that this started some time last summer. "Sometimes last summer", I do recall. Jane walked into my office and stated her

interest in starting a local newspaper. Since I did have all the printing equipment for a newsletter my office printed in the past, I acknowledged and pledged full support as I knew a source of getting information to the people was badly needed. Especially with the Land Claims fight going on and, at the time, the land allotment push. I gave her my copy machine, stencils, ink, some paper, and assisted her in getting someone to work with her through the On The Job Training program under AFN. I also assisted her in getting distributors in the villages as I knew most of the people in the villages of this region in which I work. Jane came to my office or called during the week, asking for news to print for about three months, then she returned my copy machine. Soon after, she allowed other opinions and articles in her paper that meant racism. She ignored my office and the newly formed Northwest Alaska Native Association office. Instead of news going to the people, it was something to start tensions amongst us, who in the past have never expressed prejudice or racism.

I thought I was doing well for the people in starting such a newspaper, but I think I helped start a monster that is working to destroy us. I must apologize to my people for taking part.

She quotes, "Those of us who had fought hard for an equitable settlement of the claims found ourselves torn, unable to share in the joy of victory; we were made to feel degraded and suspicious."

The Board of Directors for both NANA and RurAL CAP, along with Senator Hensley and Representative Ferguson, fought strenuously, day after day, to give the people they serve, a JUST settlement. Shortly after the passage of the Claims Settlement, Jane analyzed what we, ignorant, savage, and uneducated natives, would do with all aspects of the Settlement. Jane

has lived in Kotzebue for a few years and also in Barrow. During her time with the Eskimos, according to the article she writes, she has developed a knowledge about US that none of US can compare. She can analyze our social, economic, and educational needs, now, and in the future. I guess, we as natives, don't know our problems and therefore, cannot analyze ourselves. We must get someone who has studied us for a few years to do it for us. Bull!

Because of the passage of the Land Claim Legislation, the consequences we will have to face in the future are going to be many. We will be forced to care for our own needs. We will have to analyze, study, then compare ourselves and our priorities to what we will expect in the future.

Jane speaks of us putting the blame on the agency people who live here today for what happened in the past. This is not true. During the Kotzebue village hearings, the concerned teacher, social worker, administrators, doctors, nurses, expressed their concerns and were sympathetic to the task now before the Eskimo people. There was communication between them and the Eskimo people, not racism. There was a beautiful exchange of ideas.

Racism is in the mind of an individual. Here in Kotzebue, it is only in the minds of just several persons and those persons have expressed through the Kotzebue news. Now it is out in the open because of these few individuals. Granted my feelings were expressed inaccurately by the press but they went ahead and used our precious older people to sign something they never knew what they were signing. To me, taking advantage of our precious older people who are uneducated to the white man's ways, only educated to the Eskimo ways, is worse than any crime. Our older Eskimos, our true link to our Eskimo

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culture. People who take advantage of them should be punished.

With respect,

BOBBY SCHAEFFER
Regional Director
Mayor, City of Kotzebue