

# A Noble Sacrifice

The younger element among the Native people is emerging into leadership, especially in the northern part of Alaska. A clear example of this is the Arctic Slope Native Association with headquarters at Barrow. This group is developing into a dynamic organization and is capturing the imagination of the Arctic Eskimos it repre-

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sents. Its leaders are mostly young men who are not afraid to speak out. Their utterances are succinct, terse and to the point. The statements they make publicly are hashed out at meetings and these sessions are not always sweetness and light but are often heated. This, contrary to the belief that Eskimos are placid in nature.

When the Eskimos make up their minds as to the direction they wish to make, they usually make their convictions known in bold manner, pulling no punches in the process. This trait is making itself evident in the manner the ASNA is conducting itself in attacking the problems of the people it represents. The young leaders have set their mark—the direction—and they are pursuing it boldly and energetically—and this with the blessing of their elders.

The concurrence of the elders, in itself, is of unique significance that has rarely happened in the past, if ever. This is an important milestone in the affairs of the Eskimo people of the Arctic. Realizing their lack of education adequate, the older Eskimos have handed over the leadership to younger people with better education, relinquishing an age-old status—that of a standing of patriarchy in the community that has stood inviolate through the centuries. They were the people from whom advice was asked by the younger and they dispensed it without hesitancy, using the sources of time-proven experiences that stood their people in good stead.

When the Western Civilization came upon the northern Eskimo people about a hundred years ago, they were bewildered with the complexities of it, and this bewilderment is still going on today. They, of course, were caught with total lack of education to cope with it.

As time passed, they realized that the best way to alleviate the difficulties it created was to combat them with the type of education the Western Civilization itself had brought with it. The old people's realization of this has brought about the relinquishment of their former status of leadership and respect in favor of allowing the younger people to take over the reins to cope with the present-day problems.

There is something of profound nobility in what the older Eskimos have done in favor of younger leaders. The decision on their part, we can surmise, was not an easy one to make—the breaking of a tradition that dated back thousands of years. This was a demonstration of the adaptability of our people and it was, no doubt, made somewhat painfully but with forward-looking attitudes for the good of our people. For this, the older people should be regarded with more respect, honor and reverence for their nobility in relinquishing a deep-seated tradition they have enjoyed throughout the remote past. The younger leadership that has emerged today should never cease to consult their elders, for from them they will gain wisdom in humanity and fairness that will help them in their work toward helping their people to gain a better life in the future.