

# Eskimos Win Borough Suit--

## *Judge Eben Lewis Rules All Requirements for Borough Met*

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Staff Writer

A victory for self-government was won in Anchorage Superior Court late Friday afternoon, as Judge Eben H. Lewis ruled in favor of the giant North Slope Borough formation.

Seven major oil companies had challenged the legality of

the borough last March 28, shortly after it was formed by the people.

The area encompassed by its boundaries include the incredibly rich Prudhoe Bay oil fields.

In Friday's ruling, Judge Lewis supported the decision of the Local Boundary Commission which had first approved the petition to establish a first-class

borough on the North Slope.

Although the law suit subsequently brought by the oil companies cast a shadow on the borough's legality, elections were held on schedule and organization and operation of the borough has proceeded under the leadership of Borough Mayor Eben Hopson.

Contacted in Barrow, Mayor Eben Hopson of the huge borough was asked about the possibility of the oil companies appealing the ruling of Judge Lewis.

"The only thing I know is that between the two of us, us and the oil companies, I think each side understood that whoever wins this one, the other side would appeal to the State Supreme Court," Mayor Hopson answered.

He went on, "Our tax base will include Prudhoe Bay and we have no problem with that. We already have authority to

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levy taxes and collection of taxes.

"The other two powers that we can exercise are the takeover of the overall educational facilities within the borough, and then we can also proceed with our planning and zoning which we already have ordinances for.

"If they (the oil companies) don't appeal within 60 days, then we're scott free."

Asked about the possibility of creating boroughs in other Native areas, Mayor Hopson replied:

"I have suggested earlier, and still believe, that organizing boroughs elsewhere would be the biggest thing in the world for those areas.

"The beauty of having organized boroughs in rural areas is that in most areas you would have only one class of cities on which you can create boroughs. There is no conflict of weighted voting for first class cities."

Lewis ruled that population requirements for a borough had been met and that the boundaries of the proposed borough were consistent with the Alaska Constitution and would include the Prudhoe Bay fields.

The oil companies participating in the suit were: Mobil Oil Corp., Amerada Hess Corp., Amoco Products Co., British Petroleum Oil Corp., Humble Oil and Refining Co., Phillips Petroleum Co. and Union Oil of California.

A strong motivation in formation of the Borough was to establish schools for North Slope

(children. Arctic Slope president Joe Upicksoun had charged that although the state had taken out giant sums of money in revenue from the area, nothing has been returned to it in the way of improvements, particularly in the area of much needed schools.

Friday's ruling will open the doors for a full go-ahead of Borough programs. There is the possibility that the oil companies may appeal the decision, but Mayor Eben Hopson said the favorable decision will allow the new government to "move faster on some things we've been holding back on."

The court's decision also opens the door for other rural areas to take a look at the advantages of forming boroughs.

The North Slope Borough lawsuit establishes an early precedent that will undoubtedly encourage other regions of Alaska's vast unorganized territory to investigate the benefits to be gained by local self-government.