

Answer to the Aleuts

The Aleuts on the Pribilof Islands have long suffered from abuse and neglect. Historically, their basic human rights have been ignored by governments which have literally murdered, enslaved and almost destroyed a culture. Despite their distance and isolation, which would seem to have protected them from intrusion, it has in fact made them "sitting ducks" for those who would callously disregard respect for the Island residents. In the age of the supersonic transport, live television and in-home computer centers, St. Paul Island has only one telephone and a weekly flight in a four-prop plane. This extreme lack of adequate transportation and communication have left the Native Islanders in many vulnerable positions.

How do Islander's respond to world opinion with one phone, to charges made by an international monied conservation organization, that has immediate access to a media which has made their lifestyle seemingly barbaric and unnecessarily cruel?

What defenses do the Islanders have when countries and mega-industries ignore rights, territorial waters and boundaries? An emergency would justify intrusion, but beneath the surface, in recent incidents that does not appear to be the case. Perhaps the Islanders could be empowered to levy their own fines and patrol their own waters. The federal and state governments should demand compensation to be returned directly, in kind, to the Islanders, and demand answers to a proposed inquiry.

If a state can spend almost a half a million dollars for "Town Meetings", they can improve the one-phone situation. If the Federal government agrees to bail out a multi-billion dollar auto manufacturer, and de-regulate airlines and control gas prices, they can improve the unsatisfactory transportation situation. If the government does not demand immediate relief for yet unforeseen and immeasurable damage the Pribilofs are again in another position to be taken advantage of, and if basic transportation and communication are not provided--legacy of shameful treatment will continue, sadly.