

The issue of self-government

To the editor:

I was astounded by Congressman Young's statement that he thinks "the Native community lost sight of the big picture, which is protection of the land." (*Young to allow no amendments to bill for 1991*, March 2.) I have several observations in response to that statement.

It is clear to me that the grassroots of the Native community have been alienated from the Native "leadership" because of the latter's participation in the corporate structures created by ANCSA. It is equally clear that the settlement itself was never ratified by the grassroots Native community and that it represents an enactment adverse to the interests they value.

That the issue of self-government should be widely perceived as inextricable from that of land protection should be elementary; but it is not, and for reasons that are emblematic of the underlying problems.

Until Natives are allowed to function under tribal rule — which, I might add, was evident and common in Alaska long before Russian or other immigrants came to Alaska — our land holdings will always be jeopardized by the ignorant and adverse wishes of the majority government.

Generally, Native people are not legislative lobbyists, eloquent speakers of "caucasian" dream, nor do they wish to be. We are fluent in the ways of harmony and community, self-sufficiency and cultural beauty. Our land and its natural beauty and fruitful bounty is the legacy that we leave our youth along with the rich stories, skills and arts unique to each tribal group.

Now, with this framework in mind and the Berger Commission report as evidence of the importance of land holdings to Native peoples, I must say that caucasian Americans do not form corporations and then go out and find an enterprise. They form corporations around an idea or business firmly in mind with a group of willing investors.

I can't explain why we as Natives should be expected to accept this burden except inasmuch as it serves majority values of development of natural resources in a way that harms the land's value as it has always existed to Natives, namely a subsistence value.

While ANCSA was declared a victory by those who would rid Native Americans of the evils that are traditionally associated with "reserva-

tions" — it has not done so. ANCSA has not obliterated poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, or the patronizing infra-structure of caucasian decision-makers whom we as Native people are asked to accept as "benevolent despots" in lieu of self-government.

If you travel to almost any small village you will see communities run not by the majority of Native who live there, but by caucasian city administrators, school superintendents, legislators, businessmen and others. All of the forums of dispute resolutions, all of the forms of government, all of the forms of "justice," criminal or otherwise, are impositions that Natives must grudgingly accept from our benevolent white despots.

This imposition speaks poorly of Americans, who, after all, announced to the world in 1776, "We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, *deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed*; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it."

It also ignores the fears expressed by the writers of the constitution in this its bicentennial year of celebration, that the interests of "discreet and insular minorities" would be threatened by majority control in a system that tends toward legislative primacy.

In conclusion, I must ask that ANCSA be seen for what it is: a failure, however well intentioned it may have been, to fairly and equitably settle Alaska Natives' aboriginal claims to land title in Alaska, and an attempt to destroy Native self-government and impose upon us a system of law that not only does not have our best interests at heart, but is actively trying to coerce us into a subservient position through overt assimilationism.

I must also ask all who see the truth in what I say to do what conscience demands and assist Natives in their struggle to assert the right of self-government. We do not want to rule anyone but ourselves.

Sincerely,
Paul D. Tony, Law clerk,
Native American Rights Fund
Washington, D.C.

Republicans oppose tax

To the editor:

The Juneau Republican Party does not believe that we Alaskans can tax ourselves into prosperity.

1. If our Democrat leaders really want to tax the wealthy, why are they

imposing an income tax on the average person who is just barely making ends meet now? Why not start by reviewing salaries and putting a realistic cap on high-paying administrative positions in state and local governments?

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What others say. . .

• *'Income tax will not stimulate the economy'*

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2. If our Democrat leaders really want to reduce the number of state employees, why not do it by attrition, instead of by firing? Not filling vacancies and gradually reducing the size of state agencies would be a much more humane way to deal with this problem.

3. If our Democrat leadership real-

ly wants to cut the cost of state government, why are they so determined to fund exotic and costly new programs, such as:

a. Mandatory state funding of pre-school and early childhood programs.

b. Mandatory counseling, sex education, and anti-nuclear indoctrination.

c. Superfluous commissions which greatly increase administrative costs without providing additional services.

4. If our Democrat leadership really wants to revitalize our economy, why not start by being a friend to resource and industrial development, instead of assuming their usual "knee-jerk" adversarial role? Regulatory streamlining and tax incentives for industrial and resources development will provide an expanded revenue base for our state government as well as *jobs* for our people.

A state income tax will not stimulate

the Alaskan economy, nor will it expand this state's long-term revenue base. Only a program of regulatory streamlining and tax incentives to encourage industrial and resource development can provide lasting *jobs* and prosperity for our people. *We cannot tax ourselves into prosperity!*

Sincerely,
Asbjorn Bo, Chairman
Fourth District Republicans
Juneau