

# Much to lose

The words of a popular and somewhat skeptical song were recalled last week during the ceremonies marking the pull-out of federal control on St. Paul and St. George Islands. "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose."

Those words bring to mind a much more obscure song that is very popular on a tiny island in the middle of the Bering Sea: "I'm going to get them for Master, Uncle Sam; We're slaves of the Harvest, look what they're doing to me."

Many songs were sung recently when the final federal pull-out was done on Oct. 28. They were songs of home and perhaps some of concern.

For two centuries the Aleuts have been slaves of czars in Russia, and presidents in Washington. They have been used and abused. Shamefully, they were abused more by the American system of equal opportunity for all than they were under the old czarist system.

That is in the past but the difficulties of the past can never be forgotten — it should be remembered during the difficult times ahead.

The Aleut people on St. Paul and St. George have been freed from their dependence on outsiders for their well-being. Now, in an immediate do-or-die situation, they must make it on their own.

It goes without saying that the federal government should have allowed a great deal more time for the Aleuts to make plans for the change. But it didn't.

The short time that the feds left the islanders put them in a situation of making life and death decisions in the course of a few days or at most weeks. It is like putting together a picture puzzle with no picture to go by.

Now the community people, Elders and younger leaders must band together to make their community strong. There will be hardship in the coming months. But there has been hardship in the past and it has survived.

And, it will survive now if people work together.

Because there is much left to lose on St. Paul. There is a town and a group of strong people who have much together. And there is a history that must be remembered by survival.