

## **Our Congressional Delegation:**

# **Congressman Don Young**

Is subsistence essential to Alaska? This poses an intriguing question. The growth of preservationist sentiment in recent years has caused some individuals to suggest that subsistence is no longer a viable concept. I cannot accept this. The subsistence lifestyle plays a significant role in making Alaska unique. To reject subsistence is to change Alaska beyond all recognition.

Webster's Dictionary, in its normally sterile fashion, defines subsistence as "a source or means of obtaining the necessities of life." Broadly interpreted, this could include everything from hunting caribou on the North Slope to assembling automobiles in a Detroit factory. Some people, however, would prefer to see subsistence narrowly defined as a traditional means of harvesting living natural resources for personal use.

I cannot agree entirely with either of these points-of-view. The whaler from Point Hope who hunts bowheads in the spring ice is certainly a subsistence user; so too is the resident of Fort Yukon who sells his winter fur harvest in order to supplement his supplies of moose meat and salmon. Subsistence use as a simple means of fulfilling nutritional needs cannot be separated from cultural heritage or from the need to rely on nature for at least part of the food supply. In this sense, subsistence is essential to Alaska.

The Alaskan way of life has come under attack from many sources. Those who have never experienced a winter in the bush cannot understand the compulsion to walk the spruce bogs in search of a moose or work through the night pulling salmon from a gill net. But to Alaskans, this is a fact of life. Subsistence is one of the essential components of the great frontier.