

Hopson says Beaufort sale procedure illegal

North Slope Borough Mayor Eben Hopson made the following statement to the Tundra Times last week about the conduct of the December 11 Beaufort Sea oil and gas lease sale:

"The coverage by the press on the December 11th lease sale indicates very clearly that the procedures followed overall were illegal, which could throw the

completed sale out the window.

"Under the laws of this country, no one, but no one, is ever authorized to sell a piece of property which it does not own, except that is what happened in the Beaufort Sea lease sale.

"To quote a portion of the article, it says, 'The Federal government gets \$23.89 million from the sale. Another \$467 mil-

lion of the cash is tied up in a U.S. Supreme Court case over how the boundary lines should be drawn between the State and Federal lands...' Without the U.S. Supreme Court decision on this matter, neither party knows how much property it owns. A simple matter of each agreeing to sell does not make legal the questioned ownership. At least

on the North Slope, we do not knowingly permit laws to be violated merely because there might be some agreement between two parties.

"This whole matter cannot proceed any further than this illegal sale, because it becomes very likely that individuals will be more inclined to act to pre-

vent exploration when they know that the property was illegally bought for exploration in the first place.

"An announced delay of exploration, as earlier suggested, to permit experimentation and scientific research on Beaufort technology may be the only way to go."