

### **Chemicals cause concern in Bethel**

Dear Governor Cowper:

In our talks at Scammon Bay a couple of weeks ago, I promised to write to you on the concerns we have in Western Alaska. Our concerns are two-fold.

First, as we all know, the mode of travel in the rural areas is snow machine in the winter and outboard motor in the summer. In traveling on these modern modes of travel, the motors are spewing carbon monoxide and nitric oxide. Thus, we are breathing the fumes that are being exhausted from the motors.

Everytime we breathe nitric oxide, we are injuring the ability to think properly. Therefore, some of our thinkability is being destroyed. Thus, we are unable to identify the dangers of suicide, alcohol and drugs.

Therefore, the use of leaded gas should be banned. Since the salmon are behaving in such a way and the fat content of King or Chinook, especially here on the Kuskokwim, are getting richer than 15 to 20 years ago, it leads me to think that the lower tributaries of the Kuskokwim are being contaminated by the acid rain from the Orient.

And the Yukon and Kuskokwim Delta (on a direct path of the air stream from the Orient) are being polluted from the fallout of the acid rain.

This has been proven in the Scan-

dinavian countries by the tests made in the streams. The lower tributaries of the Kuskokwim, west of the Alaska Range, are being polluted. Therefore, the salmon entering the river smell the acid at the mouths of the streams and do not enter the streams.

For that reason, we are starting to catch fat fish. These fish are apparently heading up the North and Middle fork of the Kuskokwim. This clearly indicates that tributaries on the lower river have acid in the spring run out of the streams. For this reason, a thorough research project should be done on the waters.

And, too, plant life should be considered in testing for aerosol. As we do not know how much pesticide is being transmitted by the air currents since we Native cannot adapt to domestic foods overnight, we have to rely on our traditional diet. Who is to tell me not to eat a contaminated ptarmigan who had eaten polluted vegetation? And when I eat it this affects my nervous system. Perhaps there is another reason on the behavior of our Native People.

With these in thought I hope a plant and water research project can be made possible.

I remain,  
Mathew Bean  
Bethel

### **Villages need to protect subsistence**

To the editor:

Floyd Westly of Noatak may not remember when he introduced me to the power of earning wages, at a ripe old age of about 11 years old. I chopped a lot of wood for the Native Store and earned a whole 25 cents. In those days a grown man's wages can be \$1 a day. I brought it home right away.

What makes me remember it clearly is my mom needed baking soda. I tried to give it to her, but she did not take it. She gave me a decision to get what I wanted, so being a young boy I bought a lot of candy, which of course I shared. How was I to know even kids can buy food for the house? Later on when I started working I always tried to make it up to her.

I was on land section on our Regional Strategy meeting. These yearly meetings are getting very important to us at a village level. The state agencies are there to hear what we have to say or ask our questions. Personally, I have difficulty asking questions. My heart beats fast. I get shaky thinking I might ask some dumb question or they might not understand my question. But I have to overcome this to learn what I want.

One of the questions I asked was, "Can Selawik people be considered as wild people? Since the government put a wildlife refuge there where the ducks, moose, caribou and other

animals live and used by the people for thousands of years." To a simple uneducated person like me it would be right. The white man law would not affect the people that live there for using animals for food and clothing if the white man put laws and regulation on their animals. It would be like restricting the white man from having hamburger at their McDonald's.

At our regional meeting we never got to village concerns or interests. My personal opinion and as I talk with friends and relatives we feel we are being squeezed in. With all the federal land, state lands, BLM lands, regional lands and all kind of land ownerships. All these we can't understand and how they'll affect. Pretty soon we'll find out we have no land to hunt.

Another thing that bothers me. I tried for an allotment of 160 acres almost 20 years ago which I never got title to. Anyway, when I stand up I can see the one side to the other and the front side to the back. Me, who have hunted our portion of the Brooks Range, the Noatak River Valley, Delong Mountains behind Cape Thompson, the Kiwalik and Buckland River areas and all the coast from Cape Thompson to Escholtz Bay. Is this my legacy to my six boys? And how do I make a will? I can't prefer one boy since I treat my family all equal.

(Continued on Page Three)



*What others say...*

# Human rights are not a 'backwater' issue

To the editor:

Mental torture is a cruel form of abuse and punishment that cuts and burns deep into the spirit and soul of its targeted victims. Abusive treatment and mental torture directed at Alaska Natives comes from the state government, where the pain originates and is funneled through the various state agencies.

The Fish and Game Department in charge of managing our fishing lifestyle continues to levy heavy fines on Alaska Natives.

The Department of Education, expending the largest amount of funds in rural Alaska, shirks its responsibility to quality education for Alaska Native students by allowing members of the dominant culture to be the ones in teaching and administrative positions, although the majority of students within the school are Alaska Natives.

The system protects the good ole boy syndrome by importing teachers and administrators from the Lower 48, while Alaskans both Native and native born are not hired. The school administration gives lip service to an affirmative action Alaska Native local hire. Their personnel roster reveals this is not what is practiced.

Alaska Natives are the largest private landowners within the state, and they should be working with the state to manage those precious resources together. It appears that the age old segregationist theory is alive and well here in Alaska. With the

economy as it is presently, it is high time to reorganize the priorities of the state by addressing and curtailing all those abusive practices we no longer can afford to condone.

The tone of leadership coming from our state government can be compared to that of the Deep South during the '60s when segregation was the order of the day. As Alaska Natives we are waging a form of civil war in rural Alaska against the state government.

The battle is to make the state government conform to a single policy in levying fines and employment practices for Alaska Natives and all other Alaskans. These issues are both economic and social, directly affecting all Alaska Natives.

In a region as remote as ours in "Bush Alaska," we are a mere "backwater issue" for the state. Human and civil rights were never intended to be a "backwater issue," according to our Constitution.

As citizens we are guaranteed equal protection and treatment under the law. It is this equality and justice that we are seeking today. Addressing those discriminatory practices stemming from the state and seeking to curtail that type of treatment, replacing it with one that is fair and equitable is desperately needed now.

It appears that the state will not grant us equality and justice until we recognize that we have been discriminated against both individually and collectively. As Alaska Natives

*As Alaska Natives we are land rich and cash poor, but we must be treated with dignity and respect.*

we are land rich and cash poor, but we must be treated with dignity and respect.

The strength of a nation is measured by the respect it renders to all of its citizens. Alaska must remain a haven for all of its people, Native, natural or imported, and they must be treated fairly and equally both economically and socially from the youngest child to the seasoned elder.

The tone of leadership and the discriminatory treatment experienced by Alaska Natives must be addressed today. It is that tone of leadership that sets the sailing course for all of the state agencies, and it must contain those stipulations that are mandated by our Constitution. Settling for anything less is rubber stamping the discrimination and disrespect that is prevalent within the Fish and Game Department and the Department of Education.

Saying it doesn't exist is a copout, and allowing it to continue is criminal. Abusive treatment, whether it is mental or physical, has far reaching im-

plications and lifelong effects.

Abuse destroys self-esteem and discrimination severs the ties that bind communities together in friendship. This state cannot advance into a healthy future under the present system. What is desperately needed for a more stable economy and government is to correct the mistakes that are abusive toward Alaska Natives.

Failure to do so only reinforces the negative factors that contribute to the high suicide, drug, alcohol and bingo abuse that are running rampant within the ranks of Alaska Natives. The tone of leadership in government must reflect our Constitution, with dignity for all.

It is said that justice embraces compassion and principle, when exercised to the highest degree within our lives. It can bring about a healing and hope for all Alaska's citizens.

June Degnan  
Unalakleet

## • *There is only one creator*

(Continued from Page Two)

We have very good leadership of our own people. We must back them up to our best. Our chairman of the land section was able to put us at ease so we can discuss our problems and questions across with no hard feelings to all concerned.

As I ponder these problems and

questions I ask for guidance and wisdom from above. No matter who the governments are or who the people are that think they won the land, there is only one creator, the almighty God.

Sincerely  
Raymond E. Lee Sr.  
Buckland