

'I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend your right to say it.' Voltaire

Editorial—

Paternalistic Attitude

There is far too much paternalistic attitude toward the native people of Alaska and it is not only the Bureau of Indian Affairs brand either we have heard about. This sickening attitude crops up from any non-native whether he be in Alaska, the Lower 48, or from any European country.

"Lo, the poor Indian, the Eskimo, the Aleut, he doesn't know my kind of civilization so I must lead him by the hand" approach is not only an insult to the intelligence of the native people, but a deterrent on their efforts to develop.

Constantly leading the native people by the nose is not the shortest route toward their development into any semblance of the mainstream, as some people say, if they wished to take that route. Lot of our people do wish to take that route but they are hampered by too much hand-leading. They are not given enough chance to use their own strength—their own courage—their own responsibility in the process.

We now have quite a few native people who have successfully bridged the gap and they didn't arrive there by being nose-led. They got there because they had courage of their own—strength of their own. They were the ones, for all intents and purposes, who rebelled against the nose leaders. They had the gumption to hold on to some of their values even though those values were discouraged. They knew they could never become complete white people.

There are, of course, some of our own people who thought they have attained the white status and having attained it, began to look down on their own people. There is no more despicable a person than that type and their own people can do well without them.

This writing is not meant to say that all non-natives are paternalistic. Not by a long shot. There are some who respect the native people for what they are—who respect their cultures and traditions for they, too, know that the spirit of a people—their strength, lies in the pristine establishment of their heritages. This should have profound respect of all no matter where they might have sprung.

There is something wrong in the efforts to change—to assimilate the native people. Breaking the sinews of their own spirits is not going to do it.

Perhaps it would be better to give the native people a free hand to solve the problem in their own way. Who knows, they might come up with the best answer because they are known to have solved some of the most formidable obstacles in Alaska.