

Lost VISTA Volunteer And an Old Eskimo

Strange Encounter Leads Into Extensive Analysis of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

Land's End Village
State of Alaska
July 23, 1973

Dear Howard,

I have been thinking about the last letter I wrote to you about the corporations and what they can or should do according to AN ACT. Talking with my friend Wally Morton about these kinds of things like stockholder's rights, the responsibility of the board of directors, and corporation charters has been very interesting for me. Even though I am an old man, I am still very curious and like to know how new things work. But what troubles me is the fact that I don't seem to have much of a choice about the whole process. I have to learn about corporations out of self-defense, not because I am nec-

essarily interested in them.

I asked Wally if it was better to be a resident in a village or a stockholder in a village corporation. He said it was a silly question because I could be both and if I didn't want to be a stockholder I didn't have to enroll as a Native. I had to remind him, and myself too, that I was a Native regardless of whether I had enrolled or not. But then we both began to realize that maybe this was not going to be quite so true in the future. After all in 20 years anyone will be able to buy stock and become a shareholder in these "native" corporations, while "Natives" being born in the next 20 years aren't Natives according to AN ACT. But all of these benefits that we Natives are supposed to be getting by being allowed to enroll ourselves

as stockholders in Native corporations are based on the taking of what was ours originally. It belonged to all of us and all of our children and it was worth far more than all of these dollars we are supposed to receive.

You see what is bothering me, Howard. I have never been a person who has been afraid of progress, even though many times I prefer the traditional ways of our fathers. To me every change must be checked to see if it will be better or worse than what it is to replace. Change is not always progress. AN ACT is bringing many changes to our way of life and I fear that not all of them will be helpful for our people. The sad part is that we had a better chance to deal with mechanical things like airplanes and snow machines, than with the changes that this piece of paper, AN ACT, is bringing so quickly to our villages. It is almost like a disease that will pass over us for 20 years and leave no living Natives in its wake.

Your friend,
Naugga Ciunertput