

Letters to the Tundra Times

Greenpeace

July 2, 1979

TUNDRA TIMES
Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Please allow me to clarify a few points re: the recent request we made for an investigation of possible dangers to the people of the Pribilofs from consuming seals.

It would be clear to anyone who reads the press release that we never said that the Japanese businesses rejected seal meat because of mercury contamination. Since we found no research being done to monitor the intake of this heavy metal by the people of St. Paul since 1971, and since so little is known about the long-term effects of non-lethal mercury poisoning, we felt it important that such studies be undertaken. Both the muscle meat and the liver contain mercury, but the muscle meat is within (sometimes narrowly) the safe level determined by the Food and Drug people. One half part per million and under can be eaten as a general rule. The level of mercury in the livers of commercially hunted bachelor seals was determined to be between 3 and 19 parts per million. Older seals have had liver levels as high as 172 ppm. To say that we are using this issue as a smoke screen is illogical: only some 500 fur seals are used for subsistence purposes and those are the seals we are addressing. The other 25,000 to 30,000 seals are at present not being used for any type of human consumption and cannot be affected.

We have not retracted any part of the press release. When contacted by Aleut officials who expressed their concern that our request would damage the marketability of the seal meat, we made the express distinction in subsequent interviews with news media even though our press release was quite explicit in defining the livers as being our concern.

The media has not fully and equally covered our points of disagreement as regards the seal kill overall. Several organizations and the Pribilof people

have basic and honest disagreements. But this Greenpeace office is proud that it has made known to other environmental organizations what the Pribilof history and, as best we can, perspective is.

We are continuing to request a study into mercury levels and sincerely hope that the current amount will be far below that of 1971. There are many environmental issues in the near future that will require teamwork by all of us. We are wedded to the earth — each of us.

Will Anderson
Ex. Director
Greenpeace

Studies

(Editor's Note: The following was submitted as a Letter to the Editor.)

June 30, 1979

The Honorable Jay Hammond
Governor of Alaska
Pouch A
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Governor Hammond:

A recent article in the TUNDRA TIMES (May 30, 1979), "Bottom fish study slammed," finally spurred me into action on the issue of Alaska's university research centers as they relate to state government research needs. I have hesitated to speak out before because I am employed by the University of Alaska's Arctic Environmental Information and Data Center (AEIDC) and feared that my opinion on this subject might be dismissed as self-interest. However, after having read the above-mentioned article, I decided that the issue is so clear cut and the monetary waste so obvious, I am willing to risk misinterpretation to bring the problem to the public's and your attention.

Briefly, the article states that in 1978 Mr. Jim Edenso (state coordinator of bottom fish industry development) hired San Francisco consultant Arthur D. Little, Inc. (ADL) to do a \$215,000 study of bottom fish development and appropriate state strategies to encourage it. According to the article, after the ADL report was issued, the legislature Interim Committee

on Bottom Fish hired noted Alaska economist Dr. Geroge Rogers to evaluate it. Rogers' critique concluded, "... as a source of data and insights, the ... report adds nothing to what was already available and on more useable form." Mr. Edenso declined comment to the TIMES, but earlier had called Rogers' critique "a cheap shot." The target, however, was an expensive one, and I think Edenso owes Alaskans some kind of explanation about why he gave the contract to ADL in the first place.

My point is not specifically whether or not ADL delivered what it was supposed to; it is much broader than that. I want to know why the State of Alaska hires consultants from outside Alaska to do research tasks that personnel at the University of Alaska are better qualified to do, particularly since the State has gone on record in support of Alaska hire and its own administrative manual states, "It is the policy of the State that professional services be provided by existing State personnel, including personnel of the University of Alaska, whenever possible." (Section 8102, Professional Service Contracts)

There is no question that well-qualified university research personnel are available. The high caliber of the research staff and the work it produces is widely recognized. Many of these people have established national and international reputations by the excellence of their work. As residents of Alaska, they have in-state experience and are strongly motivated to produce high-quality, relevant, useful research products. The increased knowledge of Alaska produced by their efforts is generally available and benefits all of us. My experience working with many of these people for more than five years is that they are an unusually conscientious, dedicated, hard-working group, and many of them regularly contribute much of their own time to their jobs.

Another point that I think worth making is that university research personnel are not state employees in the sense that their salaries are directly paid by state appropriations. In F. Y. 1978, for example, only 22.3 percent (\$8.3 million) of the total U of A research agencies' budgets

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came from state appropriations. (In the case of AEIDC, our state appropriation did not even cover our annual rent payment and free public services.) Most U of A research is supported by contract work with federal government agencies -- indirectly all of our tax dollars, of course, but awarded after open bid procedures or on a sole source basis, because for the specific projects the federal government recognizes the unique capabilities and talents of U of A's research centers. In light of this, perhaps you can tell me why the State of Alaska badly underutilizes this important state resource.

The ADL bottom fish report serves as a convenient and blatant example of some of the major criticisms I hear about our state government -- waste of money, questionable ethics, and poor decision making. As governor, you have gone on record many times as against all three in

your administration and project a public image as a conservative, honest, decisive man. "Actions," as the old saying goes, "speak louder than words." I urge you to take some action in this matter. It makes no sense to me either monetarily or intellectually for our state government to continue to arbitrarily contract with outside consultants instead of better-qualified, resident researchers.

Sincerely,

Judith S. Brogan
815 "O" Place
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

cc: Anchorage Times
Anchorage Daily News
Tundra Times
Fairbanks News Minor
All Alaska Weekly
Southeast Alaska Empire

Technology

Chefornak, Alaska

June 28, 1979

To the Editor:

To battle side by side with our land against the on coming computers is the last thing any man can do. As we can see from the past - technology - to an extent is the killer of our precious land and sky. To take her pride and strip her of her existence will not provide man with wealth but will lead to destruction of a land. The land, sky, and also the people which are the victims will choke with the waste that trails the machine that slowly gnaws away the precious land and sky. A sterile land does not reproduce, but blows dust as if to say "Here take my dust too". It takes

more and more of the land and sky to feed the machines to do mans thinking, which when the answer finally comes out - is too late.

John Nevak