



Editorial—

What Will You Do If We Do This?

The village of Anaktuvuk Pass in throes of decision and indecision about moving or not moving the village, sent a delegation of six men to Fairbanks this week to meet with over 40 officials of the State and Federal agencies.

The delegation came to ask in effect, "If Anaktuvuk Pass moves, what will your agency do to help? If Anaktuvuk Pass does not move, what will your agency do to help? If part of the population of the village moves and part of it stays, what will your agency do to help?"

The three questions are the story of Anaktuvuk Pass in a nutshell and the dilemma is caused by the continuous gnawing shortage of fuel that has gone on for years.

The people of Anaktuvuk Pass, The Nunamiut, or, The Land People, has a history of nomadic way of living before they were persuaded to settle in the present

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village site about 20 years ago. At that point, the civilization that had come in contact with them sporadically had taken a foothold and the Nunamiut settled at the present site with a conscious, or acquired, need to educate their children so they could keep up with civilization. No one can argue against this concept. It was noble of the Nunamiut to decide to do this and it was noble of those people who helped them decide. Thus, the 20 years-ago-decision was, perhaps, the right decision because civilization was bound to catch up with them anyway. The modern civilization would not have allowed them to continue their centuries old way of life.

However creditable the decision to settle at Anaktuvuk Pass was, it was also the point for the Nunamiut to give up some of their security. True, their way of living by modern standards was a hard one but they had chosen to live it in that manner by tradition. They chose to stay in this area for a time and that area for a time. They knew when to move and they knew where game would probably be plentiful. They also had no fuel problem that is plaguing them now.

Perhaps their mode of living then was on a sustain yield basis as far as fuel was concerned. Once they settled in one central location, however plentiful the willows for fuel was, the former basis was abandoned. In a dozen years, perhaps, the immediately available fuel began to recede and the Nunamiut had to go farther and farther to get willows. Today, they have to go 20 miles from the village by dog team to get fuel that used to be available just outside their doors. This pursuit for warmth is time consuming for the men of Anaktuvuk Pass and it is cutting into their valuable hunting time.

Thus, a stark reality of a gnawing problem is facing the Nunamiut today, much of it is due to an artificially created situation.

Every culture develops unique solutions to its way of living in its surroundings. These are delicately balanced and intimately connected. When something from the outside causes change, many unforeseen side effects occur. Often there is little time to come up with new solutions before these side effects become a crisis.

Since the Nunamiut problem has been created by the outside world, the solutions will have to come partially from the outside. In whatever manner these might be attempted, the human element should be realized fully because the social structure of the Nunamiut has also changed—that of taking roots in Anaktuvuk Pass that has become their home.

Other areas that have been neglected to date, such as health and sanitation problems, should also be attended to. If this is not done soon, these areas could also become centers of crises.