

Howard Had It Right

VOTES ARE VITAL

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is part of an editorial which appeared in the Feb. 3, 1964 issue of Tundra Times. It was written by the late Howard Rock, editor/publisher and founder of Tundra Times. In this election year it is still as valid and timely today as it was 12 years ago.)

When Ft. Yukon Indians voted overwhelmingly against Rampart Dam, they demonstrated that they can vote in a body after they thought out the issue at hand. The rest of the Natives in Alaska should take notice of this and start working toward making an energetic effort — a truly serious effort to align themselves toward arriving at crossroad where they can begin to work together on political matters whether those matters concern candidates or issues.

First of all, let us all realize that our votes are the most important possessions we have in the political picture in Alaska. One of the most desirable things we can do for ourselves is to learn to use them in a proper manner so they can serve us in a most advantageous way. We can make our votes work for us. Let us all realize this once and for all. We have been using our votes altogether too haphazardly.

To date, pulling wool over our eyes has been a very easy manner for politicians. Let us reflect a little and try to see how unwisely we have been using our votes. Have we been swayed too easily by glowing promises made to us by politicians? Have those politicians been kept?

We have heard some responsible Natives say about certain politicians, "That so and so is not a bad fellow. He is a nice man." This kind of evaluation of a candidate is not enough reason why Natives should cast their votes just because the man was "nice." The politicians are usually nice during their campaigns. They try to get your votes any way they can. They will pat your back and give you a nice smile but this niceness is not necessarily a guarantee that they will work for you.

Natives represent many, many thousands of votes any politician will want to have. The office seekers will try various ways to get them. Remember that. We should be more stingy with our votes because they are precious — much more precious to cast for a mere smile or an uncertain promise. We should learn to make the politicians work hard for our votes. Let us weigh their words carefully. What are they campaigning for? What are they against? What are they proposing? Will the proposals do us any good, or can they possibly be tricks? These are the things all of us should be on guard for.

We think it would be a fine idea if village leaders and their people discuss the importance of casting their votes. It is not too early to start. Casting votes is not to be taken lightly. If we learn to use them as effectively as we can, then we will have learned to make our votes work for us. They can attain for us a more adequate representation in our National and State governments.