

Hippler: I abhor all racism

To the Editor:

Mark Twain tells the story of a gentleman who'd been tarred and feathered and then rideen out of town on a rail. "If it weren't for the honor of the occasion," he noted, "I'd just as soon have missed it." I think I can identify with that.

The October 12, 1983 issue of Tundra Times carried an editorial, a highly editorialized news story and a semi-humorous op-ed article, all of which could fairly be characterized as unflattering to me. This is a response, which in the interest of fairness, I assume you'll print.

I think the editor of Tundra Times may have missed something in asserting racism on my part. To anyone who's ever read any of my writings, it must be abundantly clear that I abhor racism by anyone, including that espoused by white liberals and Native leaders. When I object to someone's foolishness, it is never because of their race.

In reference to whale hunting which Tundra Times seems to feel I oppose, there again they seem to have misread. I rather think I may be one of the few non-Natives anywhere who supports Native rights to hunt whales based on their natural law right to do as they please. I've written that often enough by now that I'm surprised Tundra Times editors aren't aware of it.

But I don't really care for the obvious nonsense of tying whale hunting to some subsistence need. You, I and everyone who knows the villages knows that there is less and less subsistence need now than there was thirty years ago. Therefore when Eskimos demand the right to hunt "x"

number of whales for subsistence purposes lest they suffer some desperate nutritional disaster, people know it's a lie and a shuck. When Eskimos claim that whale hunting is an important religious rite to them, that is misleading. No one actually believes that whatever constituted aboriginal Eskimo religion still exists. But there are rights Eskimos may and should assert which all free men must support.

Why not have the courage and honesty to assert that you like hunting whales, that it's an old cultural tradition and they taste good, and tell the the IWC, Greenpeace and the Sierra Club to take a flying leap? It's playing into the hands of the people who want to control all of our lives, yours and mine, to play their stupid numbers game.

Oppressors who sit in some Eastern seaboard city and decide you should not hunt whales do so because ultimately they want no one to hunt anything. Based on some perverse logic they claim all life is equally sacred, human and animal. By that very assertion, they deny any special value to human life, and through that assertion erase all of our human distinctiveness. They open all of us to arbitrary treatment.

This danger cannot be defeated by arguing special privilege based on race or culture, but only by asserting rights as free men.

It is right to assert that you intend to do as you wish so long as it harms no one else. What is wrong is to demand some exclusive right based on race. Isn't it transparently obvious that if government can grant one special privilege based on race, it can mistreat and deny one based on race?

Why support such a dangerous precedent?

Wouldn't every Inuit, Aleut, Dene, Tlingit, Suk or Tsimshian be safer, and indeed possess more dignity, if he or she were judged as an individual and possessed rights as an individual human rather than as a member of a racial group?

I oppose racial quotas and every use of race to give or withhold privilege or rights. Most Alaska Native "leaders" apparently want to use race as a criteria for receiving benefits. How does my strong opposition to the use of racial criteria in public matters make me a racist and the expressed preference of some Native "leaders" for the use of racial criteria make them "not racist"? Doesn't that sound a little backward?

Finally, a word of caution. We all know, or should know, that not everyone who fawns on us, tells us we're wonderful and kisses up to us is our friend. Sometime indeed those who point out some of our faults are not only not our enemies, but may be truer friends. The same sweetie pie white liberal who refuses to criticize you when you do something stupid often sneers at you behind your back. It may well be that the people you can really count on in the crunch are those who support principle over expediency and who are not afraid to call a spade a spade. But then, everyone has to discover that for himself. History is full of people who have. And who haven't.

In any event, best wishes on the continued success of your forthright paper.

Sincerely,

Arthur E. Hippler