

Editorial

We hope it's just rhetoric, Tony

By declining to hear an appeal of the *Katie John* case, the U.S. Supreme Court has cleared the way for the federal government to take over management of subsistence fisheries in certain navigable waters. This results from the state's continued failure to comply with federal law by protecting priority access to fish and wildlife for subsistence harvesting.

The state has vowed to continue the fight once the federal management mechanism are in place. We hope this is chiefly a rhetorical reaction springing from the agony of legal defeat, for clearly the state has *lost* this significant battle.

To continue the legal contest would be a costly and hopeless enterprise which would poison the alliance the Administration has tried so hard to cultivate with rural Alaskans. It might be another matter if some advantage could be gained in developing a statewide consensus on the subsistence issue. But continuing the challenge of the *Katie John* decision is unlikely to produce even political benefits, for the whining urban hunters who so doggedly oppose Native subsistence cultures certainly won't reward Knowles for taking such a stand when they haven't forgiven him for dropping the state's challenge of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

Instead of more legal wrangling, let's devote the time and resources of the Dept. of Law towards the development of that elusive statewide consensus on subsistence.