

Letters to the Editor

11215 Monogram Avenue
Granada Hills, Calif. 91344

Dear Fellow Alaskans:

Alaska is loosing the greatest natural resource she has due to the lack of necessary graduate schools. We must have these schools to keep our talented Alaskans where they belong.

Hundreds yearly are leaving to get the education necessary for their chosen professions. Many will find opportunity elsewhere and never return. Thus our state is loosing many potentially great business men professional men and statesmen at a time when she needs them most.

We are graduate students. We thrill with the growth Alaska is experiencing at this time, but find ourselves on the outside looking in because we are forced to live elsewhere. We didn't want to leave and wish we could come home.

We are asking, no pleading for the help of all our fellow Alaskans. Please write your Congressmen, statesmen, educators, any anyone else that can help us get a Law School and other graduate schools needed to keep future manpower and brainpower from leaving our great state.

Sincerely,
U of A Graduates

Alaska Native Industries
Co-operative Association
1306 Second Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98101
November 6, 1969

Dear Mr. Rock:

The Tundra Times has become enjoyable reading for both myself and the ANICA Staff since I became the Manager of ANICA last February. Combined with the field reports of ANICA's three field men, it provides us a well-rounded picture of what progress is taking place on the Native scene in Alaska.

Normally, I am not much given to replying to newspaper articles, but the Tundra Times dated October 10, 1969, carried an article on emergency reserve gasoline which I feel moved to comment on in more detail. The article involves 300 barrels of gasoline sent to Toksook Bay in the Kuskokwim River Delta and credits Senator Gravel with requesting Alaska Native Industries Cooperative Association buy this emergency supply of fuel to prevent serious fuel shortages in a five-village area of the Kuskokwim River Delta this winter.

While this office has the highest regard for Senator Gravel and his interest in the Native problems, and while ANICA has enjoyed extremely fine cooperation with Senator Gravel, it was not his office which asked or motivated my decision to spend money belonging to the entire membership of the Alaska Native Industries Cooperative Association for this 300 drums of emergency fuel for five villages, only two of which purchased from ANICA. It was Mr. Richard P. Birchell, BIA Bethel Agency Superintendent.

ANICA is not in any way funded by the BIA or by any government organization, except in the Store Advisor program and that assistance ends next year. The yearly purchasing done for each store is not based on a villages' need. Instead, like an individual buying household groceries, purchasing is based on each village stores' ability to buy. Accordingly, those stores who have operated their community-owned stores correctly

over the years have been able to purchase the gas necessary to feed the mushrooming fleet of snow machines, gas generators and the ever-present outboards. This is the case with such stores as Hooper Bay, Mekoryuk, Kwethluk and many others in the Delta and up the coast clear to Barrow.

The problem of ANICA not being able to purchase gas for a village comes where a village-owned store has been improperly run over the years, such as giving credit, too much extra labor, or other poor business practices which reduce the net assets of the store. Another of the problems faced by some villages is too many little "under the bed" stores. This prevents the community store from having sufficient sales to grow with the village. Almost without exception, it is these villages who find themselves faced with emergency petroleum shortages during the winter.

Last April, the ANICA Executive Board met in Anchorage to review ANICA business. At this meeting, there was a proposal submitted to the Board that the ANICA Cooperative take steps to do whatever it could within the boundaries of our financial limitations to prevent emergency fuel shortages in the ANICA-member villages. The Board is all Native and all live in the villages. A "Petroleum Reserve" plan was approved at that meeting for implementation in the various ANICA-member villages, subject to determination of available ANICA monies by the ANICA Manager. News of this plan was then relayed to all village ANICA Directors and to BIA Superintendents so that they might make plans to prevent fuel shortages this coming winter. A number of villages responded through their ANICA Directors and fuel reserves were sent by the second sailing of the North Star and by barge out of Nome. Other reserves should be delivered this spring on the North Star if ANICA is financially able to handle the burden and if those shipments sent out this fall are paid for as planned as the villages use the gas and oil.

Just prior to the last sailing of Alaska Steamship to the Kuskokwim Area, Mr. Birchell contacted me by telephone from Bethel and asked if the "Petroleum Reserve" plan was in operation. I replied that it depended on what village, how close to other commercial fuel sources, and so on. Mr. Birchell's BIA Staff had conducted a village by village survey to determine "before the emergency arose" just what the fuel situation in the Kuskokwim villages was. His staff had found that there would very likely be sufficient oil to meet the winter heating needs, but that in the five-village area mentioned there would likely be gas shortage this winter, a shortage of about 300 drums.

Would ANICA be able to help prevent an emergency? Could

the 300 drums of gas be purchased in Bethel and barged to Toksook Bay? As Manager of ANICA, I knew that the Native Store at Toksook Bay had only been able to purchase 21 drums of gas on the spring voyage of the North Star because of the poor credit position of the store. Not much gas for a village of 400 plus. I also knew that over 200 drums of gas was delivered to Tununak which would probably hold that village through the winter—but not if Toksook Bay, Nightmute, and other villages came over by snowmachine and bought their fuel. In consideration of this emergency developing, I agreed to work with Mr. Birchell to secure the necessary 300 drums of gas.

A check of the Bethel Area by the BIA Staff showed that there were not 300 empty gas drums available in the entire area, so local purchasing was out. Within hours, Mr. Birchell called back and advised ANICA of this problem getting fuel from Bethel to Toksook due to commitment of the barges to river trips and rough weather on the ocean side of Nelson Island.

The only resource open to us then was Alaska Steamship Co. who had just finished loading for its last trip North. A call to Standard Oil raised the question of the 300 drums being available in the Seattle area (due in most part to North Slope drum usage) and whether the Alaska Steamship would take the shipment so late. An hour later, Standard Oil called back after talking to Alaska Steamship Company that they would take the cargo if Standard Oil would find the drums. A verbal order for 300 drums was given over the phone to save time. The gas did make the ship and was on its way to Bethel. Further telephone conversations with the BIA Bethel Office firm-ed up arrangements to get the cargo moved from Bethel to Toksook Bay by barge. If barge shipment had not been possible, it would have meant costly air shipment of the gas from Bethel to Toksook Bay.

As a follow up to this gas shipment of this gas to Toksook Bay, I was made aware of a letter written to Senator Gravel by Mr. Paul John, I believe. In his letter, Mr. John forecast the coming hard winter for these five villages and solicited Senator Gravel's help in solving the problem. Shortly thereafter, we received an inquiry from the Juneau BIA Office asking what the gas inventories were in Tununak and Toksook Bay. This was in reply to an inquiry from Senator Gravel, apparently in response to Mr. John's letter. We then provided the Juneau Office with figures including the 300 drums on "Reserve" gasoline.

Again, I am not attempting to discredit any efforts put forth by Senator Gravel. What I am doing is pointing out that there are many "on the scene" people who feel a great deal of com-

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passion for the village people and their problems. This includes not only Mr. Birchell and his staff at Bethel, but State people, OEO, and even that seldom heard from outfit, ANICA.

The last point that I would like to make is that the purchase and shipment of 300 drums of petroleum products runs into many thousands of dollars. These are not Federal dollars nor are they State of Alaska dollars, but Native dollars. Dollars which have been the backbone of Native cooperation with each other for the past 22 years in a Cooperative called ANICA. ANICA is not much of a flag waver, nor are we very politically orientated; frankly, we are just too busy trying to do a good job of what the Cooperative was originally designed to do, provide sensibly-priced foods and general merchandise to scattered Alaskan villages.

It isn't with just a little pride that ANICA points to its central purchasing system which has built itself an AAA credit position or the marine insurance program that is built into the landed cost of all water shipments sent by ANICA or the Reserve for shipping loss which holds the cost of village goods down to their normal level when nature interferes (such as the river being too low for barge delivery to Shungnak, ANICA picked up the tab for over \$4,000 in air freight to Shungnak without raising the cost of one item in the Shungnak store).

Then you might consider the

ANICA insurance program which is unique in bush Alaska and covers literally hundreds of village store buildings, warehouses, community halls, and a few light plants—Point Hopes' store, community hall, and generator are all covered under this policy and stores at Hooper Bay and Unalakleet have burnt to the ground and been rebuilt. Only Standard Oil Company and the State of Alaska have similar insurance programs that I know of and they are not on Native-owned buildings to the best of my knowledge.

Additionally, ANICA employs three hard-working, traveling men who spend half their time traveling from village to village in their areas working with the village store managers, councils, and doing whatever they can to upgrade and improve the general welfare of the village store and people.

Enough about ANICA. I had better get to work. I did want to emphasize in this letter, however, that although much support and help comes from Washington, there are an awful lot of people "where the action is" just as interested and working just as hard in their way. I appreciated the nice letter your Miss Ericsson wrote to our Store, Ron Larson. ANICA will continue to lend assistance to the Tundra Times and to communication between the villages whenever it can.

Sincerely,
Donald S. Dorsey
ANICA Manager