

A plan please

Once again the Grand Lord Pooh-Bah has struck.

His eminence, the honorable James Watt; Keeper of Our Lands and the Fish and Fowl Thereon; the Great Developer; Lord of Wildlife; the Great Protector of Our Native Peoples; and Chief Magistrate of All the Fishies in the Rivers and Streams; this Great Man has stuck again.

Watt was in Seattle over the weekend announcing he intends to support legislation to "open up" hunting and fishing in Alaska's National Parks. Of this proposal we do not take particular umbrage.

Although there could certainly be some danger involved in wholesale opening up of federal lands for sportsmen, we feel certain Alaskans, especially life-long Natives and non-Natives, would zealously guard against any frivolity or malicious mischief from hunters within these boundaries.

At any rate, such legislation is only in the planning stages, and we cannot comment to any further degree unless and until such legislation is introduced and explained in Congress.

What particularly galled us was Mr. Watt's reported comments concerning subsistence, with special reference to Interior's role concerning this vital matter.

Watt reportedly said that the Department of Interior *has no contingency plans* should the subsistence repeal initiative pass after November's election.

No contingency plans! To explain away his reasoning for no contingency plans, Watt stated, "I'm told it's (the subsistence initiative) not going to pass."

This must be of particular interest to those who are seeking to repeal Alaska's subsistence laws. For, if they do succeed in erasing this vital law from Alaska's books, they can probably plan on at least one year, maybe longer, of unencumbered freedom to pillage and plunder the resources so necessary for survival to rural Alaskans.

And, unchecked, they could do great damage, perhaps irreparably, to the delicate balance of fish and wildlife within the state.

Because how long would it take a large and sometimes unwieldy organization such as Interior to gear up and fully implement plans to retain subsistence lifestyles? Certainly not weeks or even months.

We are truly appalled that this man, in such a powerful and prestigious position, would deign to express such careless disregard and callousness toward a proposition that is of such import, both physically and spiritually, to so many people.

It is, after all, incumbent upon Mr. Watt, in carrying forth his duties responsibly, to think of the future, as a safeguard for those people who are affected by his planning, or lack thereof. What will happen — God forbid — if the subsistence initiative is repealed? Who and what will suffer? Where will Alaskans go to find food? At what price?

All it takes, Mr. Secretary, is a little plan, — a contingency plan.

Please?