

Subsistence is a high pressure word

By
SIDNEY HUNTINGTON

What is subsistence? No one has defined the word honestly yet.

People sometimes get carried away with and by what other people try to do or say about subsistence.

At this day and age in the interior of Alaska as well as other areas of the State, we have heard the word (SUBSISTENCE) used like an ax in threat to the advantage of some people to try

to obtain their goals. And to the disadvantages of others, sometimes discriminately, to define one persons rights over another citizens right because he or she did not meet certain qualifications and therefore would not be eligible to harvest some of the resource that others may harvest.

I have said before, I raised a large family off the resource of this land, in a subsistence way of life, the natural way of life. The resource seemed to have been available when needed. If it was not available we used a substitute, or went out of our way to get what was needed most to keep a family going.

I have watched my neighbors and other people in many other areas of the State have

very good years, and some very lean poor times all depending on what land and waters had to offer. Sometimes, if not most of the time, how well one fared depended on just how much effort was put to harvesting what resource was available at the time. In those early days, up to the late 1940's, more time and effort was put into harvesting the resource, to live or survive by, than later years because it was the only way of survival, which now sometimes is called a subsistence way of life, I guess. To me it was a way of survival, a natural way of life, of my earlier years because there was no other alternative than to hunt and fish to survive. Jobs were non-existent or very few and far between. The jobs that might have been available were filled by whites, most times brought up from down south. The same is true today. Who gets most of the good jobs on the north slope? Who gets all the fancy fire fighting jobs? I am sure the boys they called subsistence users were not called first.

Anyway, I personally felt the true subsistence user was too proud to stoop to take orders from a damned fool whiteman who had to work for someone just to eat in those days.

Those good old days to most of us are just dear memories. It was called LIVING. Now we are trying to change the word to subsistence.

The very word subsistence sometimes is used very discriminately sometimes even used

to put political pressure on individuals or groups of people, in bargaining or trade off, to achieve political promises made to the voters in different areas of the State.

Subsistence is a high pressure word sometimes used by Indian corporations and especially by the employees of the federal government and their agencies, to cover up just what they are really going to do. (Like to soften up the public as prime bait before giving them the axe.)

It is at this time being used quite successfully on all the monuments and game withdrawals to class people in a discriminatory method as to see who can harvest and who is not eligible to harvest the same resources. The Feds along with Mr. Udall have presented a seemingly good picture. The only trouble I have is I see right through the picture. For me it carries too many false promises that will only have a short life. Political pressure and friends of the earth do-gooders, call them what you may, environmentalists will have all but eliminated those promises along with some of their other objectives.

One of your first ways of life they will have to traded off is the steel trap, by which you used to feed your family and buy your babys milk with. All because its cruel to feed your babys that way. Right now they are making a drive to stop the Aleuts from killing fur seal because its a cruel way to support ones family.

You were never told directly that not too long from now you would not have the lawful right to kill game to eat, big or small, with a gun of any size or caliber. One item at a time. Snaring, bow and arrows, you name them, will be classified too cruel to hunt game to eat. Your gun, the type that made America, will be welded closed, to be used only as a wall piece.

I too often go to special called meetings through out the State. At some of them I get really upset listening. Especially to the Feds telling the rural Alaska Indian how much they are going to do for them. Of course that their job. That's

what brings in their pay check. So why not, somebody has to. Subsistence is the one word they hash up by telling the people all about it like it was something new, just invented, especially for the Alaska Indian by the Feds and do-gooders plus our politicians in Alaska but mostly in the lower 48.

No one seems to stop and take a long hard look at just what it is all about or maybe careless, of all the rot in store for us down the road ways. Here is what I believe. If we say yes to all or even part of the program presented to us we will cut down on our gassing on a bad ride. Because most, if not all, the programs presented are cut and dried for us through hours of bargaining by politicians and environments. This means to me only one thing, the results the Alaskan gets are the dirty end of the rotten deals.

I would say that 75% of the people peddling the word subsistence don't really know what the word is all about. It is too bad the word is being used to benefit only those who use the word as a leverage, and the actual users of the resource from whom God intended the resource for in the first place. For me it is a crime. Never the for whom God intended the resource for in the first place. For me it is a crime. Never the less I will use the resource to the best advantage I can as long as I can or am allowed to. I guess about that time, we will try, living off a good life we use to have, at least in memory.

In closing, may I suggest we keep a cool clean mind and don't believe any of the crap the Feds or any one else has to peddle or preach to you. To go along or believe them you are inviting a faster deterioration of your God given rights as a human being. To use your resources, preserve those resources for the best advantage of human consumption and the welfare of the people who choose to call Alaska home and really live here in Alaska.

I have found 90% or more people going to meetings, called by who ever really don't know what the meetings are all about. They sometimes take home bright false pictures, very confused ones, but mostly none at all. I really feel bad that our government could be so misleading. If you are an Indian you are not the only ones being misled, the Whites fall into the same category.