

Editorial—

Barrow Should Gird to Rule Own Community

With the discovery of great oil resources on the North Slope, it is already becoming very evident that great many people will be traveling to the north and quite a few of this great influx could be seeking room to live in the community of Barrow.

During the quite a few years in the past to the present, Barrow has been noted as one of the larger Eskimo communities that has as its own officials—its own longtime residents—the Eskimos. Barrow city council is known as one of the most effective local governments in northern Alaska. Having had this, Barrow has been moving forward with energy toward realistic community development that has amazed out-of-the-area observers. Barrow has zip and go because of its strong local government whose members are calculating and who are not afraid to speak out for their people.

In view of the probable influx of people to the Top o' the World community, the present leadership there should look ahead and plan to keep its own governing powers to continue while keeping in mind the needs and requirements of those who will be coming in to live. Some of those incoming people will probably become

'I may not agree with you but I will defend your right to say it.' - Voltaire

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permanent residents. Most will be transient type of population. This is known as a fluid population—people who move in and out of the community. Although fluid, this group will also require services, accommodations, and good, basic form of local government will be needed for the location as a whole for orderly living.

There may be a point in the future where the balance of the population of Barrow, percentagewise, may be 75 per cent Eskimo and 25 per cent white. This ratio could increase in favor of the white. This is where, we believe, pressures will develop on the local government and some measures to meet them will have to be made. It will then be necessary, more likely, to install representatives of the white portion of the population into the city council to keep peace in the family, so to speak. These are the possibilities that should be weighed by the leadership of Barrow.

The infusion of the white influence into the Barrow city council will probably be inevitable and this possible eventuality should be viewed by the Barrow people and the council where they should seek ways to meet with good plans for the good of their people as well as for the good of the white portion of the population without relinquishing the dominant power of the local Eskimo government.

Barrow, during the recent years, has been blessed with good local government. Its energetic efforts toward self-improvement has been evident and has benefited its local Eskimo citizens. The achievement of this effective governing power should be guarded with something of a jealous concern because we are now seeing in Barrow a community excellently governed by its own Eskimo leadership. This makes it a strong village. Its dilution with outside influences, unless done with foresight along with fairness, can be a setback.

Barrow is setting a fine example among the native communities in northern Alaska. We should hate to see this fine accomplishment wither away due to lack of foresight. The way to perpetuate it should be scrutinized now.

The dynamic leadership now existing in the big Eskimo village is a fine thing to behold. It stands out in contrast to other larger native communities in northern Alaska whose governments lack strong local native membership and who, it seems, lack initiative and confidence to try to enter into the affairs of their localities. This weakness has hampered their people in their efforts to better themselves because of the seeming timidity of the existing leadership in those communities. As a result, the native people in those particular localities are governed by those who do not always see their real needs.

The Top o' the World community of Barrow is different. Its leadership has taken hold of the needs of its people and as a result, has moved ahead fully knowing the problems and requirements of its population. We hope this will prevail in the future, and it can with proper foresight aimed to meet the problems as they arise.