

# ***Nondalton Natives Resent Distorted Picture of Their Village***

(From Bristol Bay By-Lines)

NONDALTON, Alaska — Invariably, we are faced with newspaper reporters who fail to give a true picture of our village and the people and what they really think. The latest such report appeared in Anchorage Daily Times, April 22, 1974. The story held infinite errors much of it based on a film, "No More Fish," which was shown at the village school, while other statements came from Don Nielsen, Dillingham host, who is not a native of the village. The Washington visitors remained in the village one and a quarter hours. During this time the reporter interviewed the Nondalton Co-op personnel, sat in on the 45 minute film, walked to and from the airstrip, ten minutes from the village, yet had time to give an elaborate account of our pros and cons relative to the Alaska pipeline hire and acceptance, welfare benefits in the community, our economic opportunities and even our failure at commercial salmon fishing.

It is not true that we, Natives of this community, decline to work on the Alaska pipeline. Right now we have 53 men ready, able and willing to go to the North Slope. All we ask is the nod from the employers that we are needed. Four of our youth have already been employed. Others are waiting.

We embrace the BLM fire-fighting. It has become a means

of livelihood now that Bristol Bay commercial fishing is something of the past. As for welfare money being distributed among families in this community, that, my friends, is a lot of "bunk." No one receives "welfare" in Nondalton unless we take into account those families that keep children for attending school purposes.

Our people believe in work. Any opportunity, or project, that offers us some kind of reimbursement cannot go unchallenged. In an area, as remote from a large city as is Nondalton, the employment opportunities are few. Projects, when granted, last but two or three weeks. Each family member then takes turn at work in order for all to be given the opportunity to earn a few dollars. Neither are the salary scales in the villages to be compared to those wages paid in larger cities. A 1974 hourly pay scale of \$2.50

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to \$3.50, especially in Alaska, is not very high.

Then we must consider the high prices paid for living essentials in the village. Every pound brought into our village has a 16 cents/lb. price tag attached to it in airfreight alone. The conception of meat and fish being had for nothing in our village is false.

At \$1.65 to \$2.00/gal. for gasoline and great distances with snowgos, knocks this mislead in the head. With mentioned job opportunities and prices as they are, do you believe that our people would deny themselves, the riches of \$700-\$800 a week?

The comment, if made by one of our residents, "All the State of Alaska ever gave us is flush toilets in the school," must have been uttered by someone lost to reality.

Statements, similar in slander, are wedges that split up

the people of Alaska. And coming from natives its interpretation becomes more devastating. Where, else but in this state, is a village our size of 200 population able to employ two teacher aids, two bi-lingual instructors, two cooks, a custodian and three adult vocational education instructors, all natives and part-time employees, besides four classroom teachers and a principal in a school of 72 students?

Does mentioned picture indicate that the State of Alaska has forgotten us?

Sure, we would like to have steady employment where we could be with our families just like in any other American community. But for us this is not possible.

Yet, given an opportunity, we shall attempt to do our best to support our families.

— *Submitted by the people of Nondalton*