

**Editorial—**

# **The ASNA Pull-out From AFN**

What could be called a partial pull-out of the Arctic Slope Native Association from the Alaska Federation of Natives although disturbing may not be as final as it might seem if the Board of Directors of the statewide group sits down in a truly serious consideration of the meaning and causes of the split.

Although ASNA withdrew from the AFN, its officials made it clear that they would, along with the AFN, stand pat on the demand of the native groups for the land claims award of 40 million acres of land, \$500 million for extinguishment of land rights along with 2 per cent overriding royalty of \$500 million.

The main cause of the rift is the provision the AFN set down for the distribution of land awards among regional groups. Under the plan, the land would be awarded on per capita basis, which means the regional areas with more native populations will be awarded more land. This concept is a logical one, of course, but it also seems a bit short-sighted to us. It does not take into consideration unique land uses of different regional native areas of the state. We also seem to detect that no long range plans for investments, or reserves, for future development of resources were provided. This concept, if taken into consideration, and accepted, could prove to be a good provision—a breadbasket, we might say, for future native populations.

The Arctic area of Alaska can be singled out as one of the most unique ecological systems in the world. The very nature of the system forced its inhabitants—the Eskimos—to utilize huge areas of land for subsistence—a fact that is still under heavy utilization today. The Eskimos wander far and wide along the coast and deep into the interior for vitally needed supplies for sustenance and for a way of life. This manner of sustaining life is a deep-rooted one. Although it is being supplemented by some cash economy, it is still being pursued a great deal more than people realize. This manner of sustenance is not going to change overnight. It must be expected to continue for a long, long time in the future.

The reasons for ASNA pull-out must be considered in depth. The AFN and its board can NOT be expected to act as if it was another governmental agency that wants to think for the people it serves without full consideration and participation of the people—in this case, the Arctic Slope Native Association. The AFN must deliberate on the basis of fairness in seeking solution.

The basis for action along these lines is there but first the pangs of selfishness, if there should be any, must be set aside so the basis for decision will spring from a sense of fairness.

A good decision could bring the Arctic Slope group back in a hurry and a real and sustained push for claims settlement can once again be implemented without too much loss of motion. A considered decision could also become a valuable source of resource reserves for the good of all natives in Alaska in the future taking into consideration the vast resources in the Arctic.