

Nothing's changed

We find it not a little ironic that the International Whaling Commission meeting in Brighton, England this year decided, after many years of discussion, to increase the strike quota allowed Inuit whalers on the North Slope.

We say this because the facts in this case have not changed from 1982 to 1983 or 1984.

The Inuit people have been whaling for centuries yet only after the intrusion of white whaling ships into the Bering and Chukchi Seas was the bowhead whale population decimated.

The Inuit people have always depended on whale for their livelihood and spiritual well-being but white commissioners thousands of miles away said they must bear the brunt of the deprivation for the decimation of the whale population.

In 1981, 1982 and 1983 the people of the North Slope needed much more whale meat than allocated and asked for an increased allocation but only this year was the allocation increased.

Why?

Because the people making the decisions finally were given the opportunity to sit and talk and spend time with representatives of the people that they had been "governing" for years.

Sen. Ted Stevens of Alaska went to Brighton, England to act as U.S. Senate observer for the IWC subsistence whale talks but he served in a greater capacity than that.

And all he did was allow the Inuit people to argue their own case.

By sponsoring that most essential of all political events — the luncheon and receptions — Stevens provided a great service to the whaling people of Alaska. He allowed them to present their stories in a relaxed atmosphere where they could be themselves.

We have often said that people would not oppose subsistence whaling if they were able to see for themselves the importance that the whaling holds for the North Slope people.

By presenting the flesh and blood people who live this lifestyle instead of talking about them from thousands of miles away, Stevens has done a great service to the people of Alaska.

We thank him.