

Letters from Here and There

Paradise, California
December 29, 1971

Mr. Howard Rock
Editor
Tundra Times

Dear Mr. Rock:

Congratulations! It shows what our Congress can do. When it really wants to work. And the Senate is more than a surprise. Its act in this case is unbelievable. When you judge it by its action in the past.

Mr. Rock, I give you most of the credit, for the speedy settlement of the Native Claims in Alaska. I sure hope that you will get it.

I was surely worrying that Congress would not get around to vote on this Bill, during this session.

With Best Wishes for you Mr. Rock, your family and Tundra Times, your Friend.

Albert Enzmann

(From KOTZEBUE NEWS)

Dear Editor:

It appears from recent articles in the OTZ NEWS that some mistaken statements about AFN Housing Programs are spreading around Kotzebue. Therefore, I would be very thankful for a chance to set the record straight before the people of Kotzebue and the other Kobuk Valley communities. Housing can get pretty complicated, so I'm afraid this is going to be a pretty long letter.

To begin with, let me bring people up to date on the progress of the AFN program. So far, we have gotten initial approval from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to build 465 homes in eleven villages under the Turn Key III Housing Program. This includes 100 homes for Kotzebue and 20 homes (not 38) in Noorvik. Under this program we can also provide roads, water and sewer systems and electrifications, where these community improvements are needed.

HUD has not yet approved the funding we need to begin detailed planning for these village programs. However, we do expect approval in the very near future. In the mean time, we have had to limit out planning to preliminary site selections, so that planning for water and sewer systems could get started. As soon as we get our planning funds, we will be able to get down to work with the individual communities to plan with them their housing programs.

Experience has taught us all that a government attitude of "Business as usual" often means bad business for Alaskan Native communities when it comes to housing. Over the past few months, AFN has been seeking to change some usual business in the federal housing programs we have to work with, so the programs will suit rural Alaska.

Some of the proposed changes are about program features that were mentioned in the Kotzebue News articles: (1) housing costs; (2) income limits and home payments and, (3) local participation. Changing the way government works takes plenty of the AFN programs which are not yet worked out. But, let me explain the direction we are trying to take on each of these issues.

(1) Housing costs—Building costs a lot more in northern Alaska

than in Seattle. This fact is not fully accepted by HUD. We have been negotiating with HUD to raise the housing cost limits to a reasonable level, so we won't have to skimp on design and construction. We can not say yet exactly how much the homes will cost. They will cost more to build than the ASHA homes, partly because roads, water and sewer and electrification will be included as needed. But the point isn't to build expensive homes. The point is to build sound houses of adequate size with basic utilities that people will be happy to make their homes.

(2) Income limits and home payments—The income limits that now govern HUD programs unfairly rule out very poor families and many middle-income families who need decent housing. Maybe HUD thinks people should live in wallets and money should live in homes. Anyhow AFN is trying to revise HUD's income limits so we can serve all families who need housing, regardless of income. For the sake of fairness of all, house payments would be adjusted to fit family incomes.

Housing experts generally agree that no family should have to pay more than one-fourth of its income for shelter and utilities. This is what we are aiming at. That way every family would be required to make a payment they can afford for housing. And, every family would be able to afford good housing, however much the housing costs.

Since this is a federally-aided program, the government can make up the difference between what people can fairly afford and the full costs of the housing.

Turnkey II allows a choice between homeownership and renting. Under the homeownership choice it usually takes about 25 years before the family owns the home free and clear. We know that this is a feature many people will not like. We are looking for ways for people to make faster payments for quicker homeownership, if they can.

(3) Local participation.—Under Turnkey III, homes are built by a private contract or with hired labor. Plans and designs are prepared by the developer (AFN) together with the community. When we get our planning funds, we will send our design team to each community to prepare and review designs with the community. We will tell the designers to listen to local ideas and we will be there to make sure that they do. We will not go ahead with any construction program until the local council approves of the plans. By the way, how much the homes cost will depend, in part, on the sort of designs the community chooses.

Clearly, bringing architects, engineers and planners to the community so that there can be real local participation in planning costs money, more money than has usually been put up for that purpose. Here again we are trying to get government to change its ways, so we can have a program that will meet people's needs. I certainly hope people will take advantage of every opportunity to participate in planning.

To repeat, changing the way government works takes plenty of time and talk. This means that we don't yet have final answers. It has also led to some delay in getting the housing program moving at the community level, since it has delayed our getting funds we need to come

to you. However, we feel the delay is worth it. If we hurried, we would end up having to fit the people to the programs.

In closing, let me correct two specific misstatements. First, AFN is not seeking family applications at this time, although we will be at some future date; Second, individuals will not be able to design their own homes, although all are encouraged to take part in public meetings about house design.

If people have any questions, ideas or opinions they would like to call to our attention, please feel free to write me at AFN Housing, 1675 C Street Anchorage, Alaska 99503. Soon, I hope we will be able to meet with you face-to-face.

Thank you OTZ NEWS.

Sincerely yours,
Mike Dozette
Project Director

December 21, 1971
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Sirs:

Hearty congratulations is in order for a tremendous Christmas gift presented to the original Alaskans in the form of the Native Land Claims law.

It is time to plan for the future and expand your emerging industries. The Musk Ox Textile project is one place to start.

In press releases lately (Anchorage Daily Times, p. 19, 1971, ALASKA Magazine, Dec. 1971, p. 15) the Big Game hunting business is out to see that about 200 bull Musk Ox be killed on Nunivak Island by outsiders who pay \$1,000 for tags and big city residents who might spend \$500. Despite anything the Board of Fish and Game does to encourage the proposed hunt, according to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Institute of Northern Agriculture, and perhaps even international treaty (there are Musk Ox in Norway and Greenland, Canada), this hunt would be illegal.

Nathan D. A. Toots of Mekoryuk, Nunivak's only village, reports that the University of Alaska is not performing their job in promoting Musk Ox cultivation of qiviut at Nunivak. Mekoryuk already has fences and facilities for Reindeer and what remains to be done is capture the Musk Ox marked for culling and start the Musk Ox Producers Cooperative to administering qiviut collecting and knitting techniques more seriously.

Don't think that experts will say that lone bulls won't live on semi-natural feed in corrals because this is just not true. The Musk Ox tutored by Lars Skifte and John Teal, Jr. have proven that the wool from Musk Ox over the months and years is much more valuable than musk ox meat.

No matter what R.S. Lee or Jim Reardon write, Paul Wilkinson has suggested that the Musk Ox program for the people of northern Alaska be initiated soon. What better time and place, than 1972 at Mekoryuk, Nunivak Island.

With continued hard work the time when qiviut yarn is spun in Alaska is not far away. This would bring the whole Musk Ox program to Alaska where it belongs.

Gary O. Briggs
400 West 11th, Apt. 5
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

AAIA Counsel Wrongly Linked with Law Firm

Association on American
Indian Affairs, Inc.
December 29, 1971

Mr. Howard Rock, Editor
TUNDRA TIMES
Post Office Box 1287
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701.

Dear Howard:

In your otherwise excellent Special Land Claims Issue of December 17, 1971, I was most disturbed to read the statement that "Art Lazarus and Northwest Alaska Native Association lawyers Wilkinson, Cragun and Barker claim (legal fees for 675 hours of work plus out of pocket expenses of \$5500)."

While I cannot speak for the Wilkinson firm (with which I am coupled in the story for reasons unknown), I do know that my firm never has considered seeking an attorneys' fee

or reimbursement of expenses out of the land settlement for services in connection with the recently enacted claims legislation. Although we in fact spent substantially more than 675 hours of time on this matter, virtually all of our work was a part of the broad program of assistance to AFN and other Native groups given by the Association on American Indian Affairs over a period of 20 years.

AAIA and I are proud of our contribution to the Native cause. The expressions of appreciation we have received—really for doing what the organization was established to do—are quite sufficient compensation.

I hope you will print this letter in the TUNDRA TIMES in order to set the record straight.

Sincerely yours,
Arthur Lazarus, Jr.