

"I may not agree with what you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it" -VOLTAIRE

BEST WISHES TO THE ARCTIC SOUNDER

We at the *Tundra Times* believe that it's a sign of the times that Kotzebue is soon to have its own newspaper, not to mention its own borough. The former, a brand new publication to be published in April under the name *Arctic Sounder*, will probably have some fair-sized hurdles to leap (as anyone who has ever worked for a weekly publication will attest to), but we are sure that the *Sounder* will shortly enjoy the praises of its community and the success due anyone who sees fit to undertake such a noble task.

If and when the voters approve the proposed Northwest Arctic Borough, the *Sounder* will no doubt chronicle the event for history and for the generation to come. Quayana!

FIGURES ON NATIVE EMPLOYMENT BY THE STATE OF ALASKA ARE UNACCEPTABLE

According to a first-ever report issued by the state Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Alaska Natives make up over 14 percent of the population of the state, yet hold no more than 3.7 percent of state jobs. These figures are disappointing, to say the least.

Still more disappointing is the fact that since Governor Bill Sheffield took office, the figures have improved so slightly — by some 40 or so jobs — that one wonders whether good intentions are going to be enough to effect further improvement.

Merwin Peters, director of EEO, says that the barrier to further increases is the system the state uses to recruit and hire people. Rep. Al Adams of Kotzebue agrees, blaming "the damned register system" for the unappealing numbers.

Tanana Chiefs Conference, Tlingit and Haida, and others are doing some fine work in improving those numbers for Native people, with the *Alaska Work Scene* (TCC), and T&H's efforts to bolster recruiting in rural areas.

But another alarming fact to emerge from the report shows that even when Alaska Natives manage to get hired by the state, they find it difficult to progress beyond the entry level. Alaska Natives remain in the lowest-paying jobs in the state.

The *Tundra Times* believes that the governor should make accelerating Native hire within state government among his top priorities for the remainder of this, and possibly his next, administration.