

Gambell Appeals For Gasoline, Oil

GAMBELL, Alaska, 99742
St. Lawrence Island
April 5, 1967

Dear Editor:

The Native village of Gambell, on St Lawrence Island has very little gasoline and no lube oil left for the rapidly approaching spring hunt for whales, walrus and oogruk.


Our store cannot afford to purchase the gasoline and lube oil commercially, because it is in financial difficulty.

On March 15th, the Gambell IRA Council sent an urgent request to Governor Hickel, asking for assistance. Copies were sent to Congressmen Howard Pollock in Washington, Senator "Bob" Blodgett and Representative Tom Balone in Juneau. In Senator Pollock's reply, he felt confident that the Governor would be able to assist us. However, by the 30th of March we still had not heard from the Governor. On that day the IRA Council placed a call to the BIA Area Field Office in Nome and asked them to help us in

contacting the Governor. They sent a teletype to the Governor's office. The following day we called the Governor's office. The person we spoke to had no knowledge of our letter, but, said she would look into the matter. On Monday April 3rd, we received a telegram from the Governor dated April 1st. It stated that "Trader Ed Shepard will be in Gambell next week. Ed feels that he can loan twenty barrels. Attempts through other sources failed." Unfortunately, twenty barrels is insufficient. We need at least seventy-two barrels and one hundred and seventy-five gallons of SAE 30 outboard motor oil to last us during the spring hunt. Each of the eighteen boats here averages 4.5 barrels of leaded gas each spring.

Last year the village ran out of gas and was forced to purchase it from nearby Savoonga, sixty miles away, and also from Mr. Shepard. With the gasoline we purchased from these two sources, we barely had

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enough food for the winter, because the spring hunting had been very poor, even with the two whales that were killed. One other whale was killed but very little meat was taken due to the bad ice conditions. At any rate, many people had no dog food at all and barely enough for themselves. We cannot afford to have our children hungry again next winter. In some cases this year, parents were forced to go without food for a day or more so that their children could eat. No one wants to see this happen again.

Without the leaded gasoline and lube oil to hunt with this spring, the village an insufficient supply of meat stored away for next winter. And each year game is becoming harder to find, thereby necessitating more gasoline. The Russians are now hunting in the same waters as we hunt. This is proof that game is becoming more scarce each year.

Loans of gasoline to our store will help, but, will only mean that we'll have that much less gas for the next year. Usually, we trade ivory carvings, raw tusks and seal skins for the

gasoline we buy. To commercially fly in the gas would mean a purchase price that would be prohibitive. As it is now, we pay \$.95 per gallon.

The only solution we hoped for was the possibility of the Air National Guard flying the gasoline in for us. From whom or where we would get it we did not and do not know. We had placed very high hopes that Governor Hickel would be able to help us in this regard. Obviously he has not, or could not for some reason.

What we would like to to know is this: If the dogs in the Fort Yukon area can be helped by flying their owners to areas where they could hunt caribou for their dogs, then, why can't the PEOPLE of Gambell be helped?

Mr. Rock, we would greatly appreciate it if you would publish this letter in your newspaper, so that our fellow Alaskans can see what is happening here. Thank you very much.

Yours truly,
The Gambell IRA Council
Clement Ungott Pres. I.R.A.