

Canada. Their skepticism about the Interior Committee proposal is clearly shown by resolutions passed by village councils last week:

"This is a resolution passed by Venetie, Alaska, Fort Yukon and Arctic Village, Alaska, along with representatives of Old Crow, Yukon Territory, Canada, on March 25, 1978, at Old Crow.

"We do hereby resolve that:

"1. Absolutely no development be permitted to operate in all Porcupine caribou range.

"2. That the proposed development in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge in Northeastern Alaska not be permitted by the U.S. government.

"3. That the Porcupine caribou and migratory birds are international in status and require International protection.

"4. That an international committee be set up by both governments to work towards international Arctic wilderness range in Alaska and the Yukon Territory.

"5. That the proposed international Arctic Wildlife Range will not jeopardize the Yukon Indian land claims as it is in progress.

"6. That the proposed development in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge is a critical calving and post calving area, and

"7. That all developments endanger calves and the survival of the caribou herd.

"Signed: Old Crow Chief John Joe Kay; Grafton Njootli, Old Crow land claims negotiator, and Charlie P. Charlie, Lazarus Charlie, Helen Charlie, Peter Lord and Stephen Frost of Old Crow, and Trimble Gilbert of Arctic Village, Maggie Roberts of Venetie and Jonathon Solomon of Fort Yukon."

J.R.R.

•Editorial

Does Congress recognize the importance of wildlife to Natives?

Congressmen throughout the United States seem to have recognized the vast cultural and economic importance of wildlife resources to Alaska's Natives and other rural people.

Or have they?

The House Interior Committee recently approved a federal land bill for Alaska which contains several important features, including granting subsistence the highest priority of all consumptive uses of Alaska's federal land.

The draft bill recognizes that competition for scarce fish and wildlife resources between different user groups must be regulated under Congressional guidelines in order to protect those resources and the option of people to harvest them. The bill affirms the intent of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to protect the subsistence-use options of the vast majority of Alaska Natives.

However, regulating the problem of competition for wildlife resources in favor of the people who have traditionally relied on those resources is only part of the subsistence problem. The problem has always had two faces; competition is one. The other face of the subsistence problem is LAND. Even if Congress passed a law prohibiting hunting for any reason except subsistence, the other face of the problem would loom before us: the integrity of the land, the ability of the land to function as the first link in the food chain of which we are all a part. We fear the House Interior Committee, in action not specifically related to proposed subsistence law, may have turned its back to the problem of land.

Rep. Morris Udall (D-Arizona) House Interior Committee agreed to permit oil and gas exploration in a critical area of the Arctic National Wildlife Range. Year-to-year studies of the area indicate it is consistently used by the Porcupine caribou herd as a gathering area after calves are dropped in the spring. The time of the post-calving aggregations, as biologists call them, is a sensitive one for the herd, still Alaska's largest and strongest caribou population.

We are confident that neither Mr. Young, nor Interior Committee Chairman Morris Udall contemplated allowing oil and gas exploration without the most stringent environmental controls and oversight, but our apprehension over development in such a sensitive area is not mollified by a commitment to environmental oversight.

We feel the proposal to allow resource development of critical subsistence habitat in the Arctic Game Range indicates a continuing reluctance on the part of Congressmen to fully face the subsistence problem. It should be obvious that the health of the land will have a direct bearing on the health of subsistence resources and their ability to feed the people who depend on them. What people fail to realize is that even strict environmental controls cannot mitigate that elusive, abrasive effect that all development has on any natural environment that is subjected to human technological activity. We submit that in this case, the land, and the life it supports, are too vulnerable to the effects of exploitation to risk any development.

The integrity of subsistence resources depend upon the integrity of the land and the integrity of the land requires that it remain pure, open and intact. We think the proposal to open the Arctic Wildlife Range to resource exploration lacks integrity if Congress is serious about protecting and perpetuating the subsistence lifestyle.

The Porcupine caribou herd, which relies for its survival on the integrity of the Arctic Wildlife Range, feeds people north and south of the Brooks Range in Alaska and