

# LETTERS FROM HERE AND THERE

May 27, 1970  
Valdez, Alaska

Dear Sir:

In a recent issue, a letter was written about the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The BIA is forever being criticized for the poor education that the Alaska Native students are receiving. I am a graduate of Mt. Edgecumbe High School and I would like to defend the education standards of the school.

Mt. Edgecumbe has a low standard of education, true, but the problem is not the program offered there. The problem is back at home and in the elementary education. If the students are not exposed to the courses that are offered in secondary education, if they are not experienced in the subjects, the going about receiving secondary education will be a lot more difficult.

I am not very well educated yet but I would like to better myself to fit into society. This I learned at Mt. Edgecumbe, the will to increase my knowledge in order to serve mankind. I would like to make an appeal to anyone wishing to pass judgement on Mt. Edgecumbe, think twice of the problems that arise in educating our younger generation. We need encouragement and a will to further our education.

Sincerely,  
Phillip Levshahoff

Box 385  
Barrow, Alaska  
May 18, 1970

Hon. Brad Phillips  
President of Senate  
State of Alaska  
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Brad:

You're a man of high position in the State of Alaska, I know you have to judge the welfare of the state. I believe you have been fair and wise in making these decisions.

Now on this controversial issue on the road to the oil fields, which I believe is a must this session whether built with federal matching funds or funded directly from the state, it should be built on primary road status, not only to the oil fields but all the way to Barrow, and eventually along the coast, tie in the rest of the villages southwest of here toward the Seward Peninsula.

I believe with clear conscience I would push this through but remember where this \$900 million came from. I believe we taxpayers in this area need the road to the outside world. I don't believe in building a road parallel with the railroad or four lane highways or the Cook Inlet Causeway while the rest of us have to depend on one airline to serve them.

Sincerely,  
John Nusunginya

Box 19  
Ft. Yukon, Alaska

(Editor's Note: The following is the second part of Larry Peterson's letter, stating his platform.)

Often it is said that we natives

are against the oil companies and the construction of the pipeline. Such is not the case. What we are against is the cold fact that we are not being trained or hired for the available jobs in the North Slope area or in the construction of the roads leading to this area. The oil boom should profit all Alaskans. Common sense should dictate that the hiring of our local people, natives and non-natives alike, is a wise policy.

Our residents will remain in in the State and our economy will prosper. Otherwise we will have masses of people from outside our State earning money in Alaska and then leaving Alaska. I would hope that the representatives of the oil companies, of the Native Associations and Government agencies and interested citizens could work together as I see no reason for not having cooperation among all factions.

As many of us fully realize our educational system is understaffed. This is true not only in the villages but in the larger cities as well. Many of our children are shipped out to the lower states, often times as far as Oklahoma for their high school training. Then too, the positions connected with the school such as maintenance men, cooks, dormitory help and teachers aides are staffed by non-local persons who may not even be as qualified as the local residents. Always employing outside help tends to kill the initiative of our people and closes feasible avenues to job security.

Our housing is approximately 70% substandard, sanitation facilities are inadequate and harmful. Our rivers and lakes are polluted. Adequate medical facilities are not available. Many of our children suffer mental retardation and cannot be hospitalized for treatment due to lack of facilities. Proper psychiatric help is is not always available for many of our adults suffering from mental and emotional illnesses. The Alaska Native Health Hospital in Anchorage is overcrowded and has 5,000 persons awaiting ear surgery. People from the bush areas must travel several miles, often 100 to 200 miles to a clinic only to learn 200 or 300 people are in line ahead of him for treatment.

Our welfare system is one of of the three lowest in the States yet our prices are the highest. We do not have enough nursing homes and as a result our elderly people often go without the proper medical attention they need or they are sent hundreds of miles from their homes to a nursing home. Here they suffer loneliness and estrangement from their families.

We lack juvenile facilities both for delinquent children as well as children with special problems. We need a better foster home and adoption placements and day care centers.

Drinking is a severe problem in many areas, but here our resources are scarce. We need help in dealing with alcoholism and we need studying into the causes and patterns of Native drinking. As in many other things, preconceived notions as to what our problem is often hinders those from seeing clearly what our problem actually is.

(The third and final part of Mr. Peterson's letter will appear next week.)