

Protests against Union Oil drilling- **Kuukpik Corporation**

(Special to KBRW)

BARROW—Union Oil is preparing to drill the first exploratory well off Alaska's Arctic Coast near Jones Island in Harrison Bay, approximately 3 miles north-east of the mouth of the Colville River.

Union Oil, together with the American Oil Company (AMOCO), owns an oil lease from the State Division of Lands.

Permission to drill on this near-shore lease-hold must be granted to Union Oil by the U.S. Corps of Engineers, responsible for regulating all oil drilling in navigable waters.

Union applied for permission to begin drilling by January 1, 1976. However, because the

Corps of Engineers has received objections to this project drilling permit has yet to be issued, forcing Union to postpone its exploratory drilling until next winter.

Thomas Napageak, President of the Kuukpik Corporation of Nuiqsut, has requested Jacob Adams of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation to join him in opposing Corps of Engineers approval of Union's drilling program in Harrison Bay.

With the help and advice of Bud Helmericks a trading post operator on the Colville River, Union has developed an ice island to serve as its drilling platform, thus scratching its original plan to drill from a

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Kuukpik Corporation . . .

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sunken barge.

Present plans would see Union re-construct its ice island platform again next winter, and the exploratory drilling would continue until breakup.

The purpose of the drilling would be to determine the potential value of Union's state oil leases in the area.

North Slope Borough Mayor Hopson has arranged with the Army Corps of Engineers to delay action on Union's Harrison Bay project until the Borough Assembly has had chance to conduct its own hearings into the matter.

Union oil officials will arrive in Barrow on Monday, February 2 to hold a workshop for the North Slope Borough's Planning Commission and planning staff, and will stay over to appear before the Borough Assembly meeting on February 3.

According to the Committee on Original Peoples Entitlement (COPE) of Inuvik, the people of Sachs Harbor, on Banks Island,

are concerned about the safety of a similar ice-island drilling project underway by Pan-Arctic Oil.

The Banks Island people are concerned about environmental damage from a possible blow-out similar to the Santa Barbara Channel disaster off the California Coast.

Union Oil spokesmen have stated that their ice-island drilling development in Harrison Bay has eliminated the problems that may exist with Pan-Arctic's ice-island projects off Banks Island, and that the geological formations in the area are not similar in any way to those of the Santa Barbara Channel.

The policy of Borough Mayor Eben Hopson is that no off-shore or near-shore drilling project should be permitted by the Corps of Engineers until the North Slope Borough is convinced that no danger exists for the people, their land, and their game.