

# Locking our doors

Last week a member of the Alaska Oil and Gas Association, the lobbying arm of the oil and gas industry in the state, spoke to a Resource Development Council and warned of dire consequences if more concessions are not made to the oil industry.

Those concessions would supposedly take the form of not-so-stringent requirements for oil drilling safety in our offshore areas and on petroleum reserves on land.

If this is not done, warned the AOGA spokesman, the oil industry might go away and Alaska might return to the dark ages of pre-oil status.

This has caused us to think a bit about the oil industry and its effects on the state.

We would be foolish if we did not admit that the presence of the oil industry in Alaska has not had some benefit to the state.

If it were not for the want of North Slope Oil the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act would not have been approved, for that oil could not be obtained if North Slope residents hadn't agreed.

ANCSA has both good and bad aspects to it but we feel sure in our minds that had it not been passed very little of the Alaska land would be in Native hands today.

But, on the other hand, oil has brought with it "progress" in the form of rapid Westernization which has brought much negative to Alaska Natives.

So we are perhaps not so impressed with the threat that oil might pull out.

We are also mindful that big and powerful and lucrative industry also frequently stamps its foot when it isn't getting its way so we again, are not so worried about the threat of withdrawal.

There are billions of barrels of oil out there and we find it doubtful that any oil company is going to turn its back on that.

So we would like to pose this question to oil company representatives:

What do you expect us to do?

Do you expect residents of the North Slope to just turn their backs to the potential disaster that can befall the people of the North Slope if an oil spill occurs and harms the bowhead whale?

Do you expect the people of the Norton Sound area to not worry and do everything they can to stave off oil development in the hope that far better clean-up methods are developed for that day when oil drilling does begin?

Do you not expect the people of the Aleutians to worry that their fledgling bottomfish industry will be killed off if a tanker goes aground and spews its cargo on the waters of their sea and at the mouth of the biggest fishery in the world?

Do you not expect the state to do everything in its power to protect every form of commerce in the state — be it oil development, commercial fishing or subsistence livelihood?

We view all of these forms of self-protection as simply natural and understandable.

After all, do you, oil industry representatives, now have locks on your doors when you are gone from home?