

'Leadership— Who Claims'

Grand Camp
ALASKA NATIVE BROTHERHOOD
(Organized 1912)

(This letter-head is used only to identify this writer.
WLP, Jr.)

LEADERSHIP—WHO CLAIMS

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The Tlingits (southeastern Alaska) have a law which works backward—if one asserts his high-caste, he loses it. In other words, he loses what he grasps. That was my reaction as I read the editorial of the TUNDRA TIMES of February 24th berating a statement of Charles Edwardsen, Jr. which would have been forgotten virtually at once.

What did he say? "My people would like to see no oil development." Considering the consequences which the editor should have seen more than EIGHT years ago when this Lazarus awoke from his hibernation to find that the greedy animals were in possession with both hooves in the trough and the black juice dripping from their composite snouts, what would you call such an animal?

We can rule out a claim of second guessing by the editor by pointing out the fact that he is an important factor in seducing the equitable owners of the land without which there would be no "gushoos" snooting for oil (the Tlingit word for "pig" inoffensive because nobody much knew this word for "pig.")

But getting back to "leadership" under whose banner, the editor reposes, while the "lemmings" (rodents as per Webster) rush madly perchance "politely" to their own destruction. Why berate Cain for selling his birthright for mush when by truth both morally and legally the Eskimos of the North Slope own the land from time immemorial. A simple complaint filed in any justice court alleging trespass could demonstrate such ownership? Has any such leader editorially or otherwise advocated such recourse? It takes nerve of course to face such a wildboar with no weapon except a book. The "sane" and "polite" solution of the editor meets the unanimous approval of the British Petroleum, Limited, but who else?

There would be no fight but for a corporation whose stockholders happen to be aborigines sans oil potentials except on the same basis of what Edwardsen called "pigs." There would be no division among the aborigines IF each group claimed its own and only its own. What aboriginal right does the Cook Inlet Brotherhood Corporation have to North Slope oil? If the members ever had any, they lost it when they incorporated. In any case, why don't they fight for the oil in Cook Inlet, e.g. Kenai?

What right does Don R. Wright, an otherwise dedicated leader who hails from Nenana several hundred miles from Prudhoe Bay, have to its oil? With the exception of two men, both North Slopers, not a single one of the elected "leaders" of the A.F.N. have the slightest claim to North Slope.

Why do they fall for the dead-fall trap baited with larceny. "We should get 25% of the Billion Dollars" says Bethel because we have $\frac{1}{4}$ of the aboriginal population by which North Slope should get 5%. Fight for your own, Mr. Bethel, be it little or large. As for the "leader-after-the-fact," stand on a principle several times repeated by all courts, towit, THE LAND OCCUPIED BY MY ANCESTORS IS MINE. FIGHT FOR IT.

—WILLIAM L. PAUL, SR. of the Stikeens