

"I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it." — Voltaire

Tundra Times



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Editorial—

A Plea and a Reminder to the Eskimos, Indians, and Aleuts

We deceive ourselves. Our native peoples of Alaska too often believe that we are no longer being exploited—that we no longer receive glass trinkets for furs. We too often believe that no one will use our native peoples to the personal advantage of that individual: as did the Russians when they thirsted for our furs, as did the first White settlers when they made their fortunes from the wealth of our lands.

It would be shameful to say that all, or even most, of the non-native population of Alaska has no sympathy for our cause. Yet now, in the time of our greatest need, we must begin to count our friends.

We deceive ourselves. During each and every election year, we listen to those aspirants. We listen to both those who have promise, and to those who have promises.

Our greatest shame would come if, in-between elections, we hesitate to evaluate the performance of politicians on those issues which concern us. We have tried to bring these issues to light through the Tundra Times and, because of the interest of native individuals and their organizations, our paper is reviewed by virtually every native in the state.

Our native land claims settlement is the single, most important issue. It will directly affect our lives, and the lives of our children, and the descendents of our race for all time. Now is the time to evaluate our elected officials. We must not allow them to make promises during one election year, and ignore our interests during the following three, or one.

We must ask ourselves, for example: Does the stand which Governor Miller has taken on our land claims make him worthy of our support during the next election? Does he deserve our 30 per cent of the vote, if he dares to run?

We must question the merits of all elected officials, whether Democrat or Republican or Independent. Does Senator Gravel's silence on the land issue benefit us? Will he always remain quiet when we need him?

Does Senator Stevens, in forming his stand on the land issue, listen to his friends in the oil industry and deny those 60 thousand of us who call ourselves the First Alaskans any representation?

Does Representative Pollock always sit on the fence when it comes to taking a position on issues which concern us? Should he take a suspenseful neutrality on the revenue sharing proposal?

If the answers to all these questions are yes, then perhaps we should burn deeply within our minds a memory of how our elected officials responded in our time of greatest need.

You might recall how our native leaders did strive for unity when we began to fight for our land. Perhaps we should consider achieving more unity among those of us 'in the rank and file' when it comes time to visit the voting booth.

Letters to the Editor

September 6, 1969

Dear Sir:

This is a letter of intent concerning the Public Health Service Alaska Native hospital located here in Bethel, Alaska. It is a 42 bed general and surgical hospital with an active outpatient clinic that rendered medical care for 24,792 clinic visits during fiscal year 1968. The average daily patient load for fiscal year 1968 was 61.7 and there were 2,298 admissions.

The hospital serves as a focal point on the Bethel Service Unit which provide medical care for an estimated native population of over 12,000 residing in an area

below St. Michael of Norton Sound southeast of McGrath, then southwest to Platinum, from Platinum northwest to and including Nunivak Island, and from Nunivak Island northeast toward St. Michael. The hospital's service unit encompasses approximately 100,000 square miles—an area that would be equal to the states of New York and Pennsylvania combined.

As of now the normal bed capacity of the hospital is 42, the average census this year is 50, which leaves eight admitted patients either in the hallway or in a room too small for an additional patient. This as you could see is one of the most pressing

physical problems of the present hospital.

The present staffing of the hospital especially in nursing is in truth poor. The recent Methodology Study showed that the hospital needs 40 nurses and the present status is 29, in which the shortage is 11. Another problem is housekeepers. They need two in the wards, one in the maternity wing, two in the wards in the evenings, two in the clinic, one in the dining area and hallways, one in the quarters area, and two men in the entire hospital in the night time.

As of now the projected time for the expansion of the present hospital is in 1971, which is 33 more beds (that would expand the beds to 75.) The estimated cost for the expansion is three million dollars.

Another matter to be considered would be in the correction of present deficiencies which would include the roof, pilings, plumbing, floors and utilities (sewage and water) which would come up to an estimated cost of 3.5 million dollars. With the expansion of the present hospital, there will have to be more living quarters which would come up to an estimated cost of one million dollars. The total cost for the expansion, correction of deficiencies, and living quarters would come to an estimated figure of 7.5 million dollars. The estimated cost of a new hospital (75 bed) is ten million dollars.

Now for the facts. There have been rumors over the past two or three years about a new hospital, but hardly anything has been done about it other than the resolution passed by the Association of Village Council Presidents and Senator Kennedy's tour which produced some money for the roof of the hospital.

The whole area is expanding rapidly and in 1966, Bethel area was rated number six in "population explosion" in comparison with the whole nation. Should river erosion continue at its present rate, the present hospital would be in danger in the near future, thus making the expansion of the hospital unrealistic, because it could be just a waste of money. This could be justified by the life span of the present hospital, rising construction costs, more maintenance on the present hospital—thus making a new hospital more feasible.

Attempts too, have been made to visit the villages at least twice a year, which is badly needed. Those sent to Anchorage are people requiring major surgery, maternity complications, and speciality (example: ear surgery).

There are approximately five to ten people a week sent over to Anchorage at the present time, thus expending a lot of federal money. With a surgeon in a new hospital, not as many people would have to go to Anchorage. As you could see, the main objective is to push for a new hospital here in Bethel NOW. THE FACTS PRESENTED ARE TRUE.

What I request is only one thing. That is to introduce a resolution for support of the early construction of a new hos-

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Regardless of our political affiliation, we must certainly realize that our primary loyalty is with that stuff which flows in our veins—the blood of our birthright.

We must all awaken to that reality more quickly than the icy water puts an end to our sleep. It would be sinful to accept the idea that we are part-time citizens for only the moment that we mark our ballots. Let us bury the thought and leave it to the worms.

We must be full time, first class citizens with a full time responsibility to elect officials who will represent our interests. We must watch them closely to see that they will not be so stupid as to ignore our needs.

Let us guard our heritage. Let us exercise our rights, and our responsibilities. Let us not forget what we are made of. Let us not allow the politicians to forget who we are, and what we want, and what will happen if we are ignored. To do otherwise would be fatal.

Please do not consider this plea as an insult to your intelligence. Think of it as a reminder of your responsibilities. Let us no longer deceive ourselves.

Brotherhood among all our peoples.

—by THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.

Other Voices—

Who Is to Blame?

Nine Beltz School students have been sent home as a result of drinking, probably never to return to fromal classwork. It is a pity it had to be this way, but we agree with Schools Supt. Clifford Myers that action had to be taken. We hope the "jolt" will serve as an example to the other kids and end the boozing it up.

One man who bought the booze or beer or whatever is now spending a year in jail as a result of making purchases for six of the offenders, all girls.

Whose fault is this?

At least in part it is the fault of Nome. The children are from the villages. They are new to the area and our ways are new to them. To them it is a strange new world.

And we are a strange-looking lot to them.

How many people in Nome have tried to make these youngsters welcome? How many of us have invited a small group in for dinner and a bit of socializing? How many have shown an interest in their problems?

What are the people of Nome doing to help? The answer seems obvious.

In the minds of too many people in the villages going to Nome means a big bender. It should not be that way. Many people do not look at it that way and they get along fine.

Unfortunately Nome doesn't have a great deal to keep the youngsters properly occupied as for civic groups or fraternal organizations to provide suitable outlets for the young people. They cannot be expected to stay in their rooms every night reading. They like to get out and have fun, naturally.

As Myers says, the rules at Beltz specifically prohibit the consumption of alcoholic beverages on the school property or elsewhere. He had no alternative but to bannish the youngsters back to their villages.

He, too, agrees that the people of Nome should do something to keep the kids out of trouble.

Got any ideas?

—ABJ, The Nome Nugget

WANTED: Chilkat Blankets; totem poles; ivory pipes and carvings; argillite carvings; pot-latch bowls; fish hooks; spoons and all N.W. items 50 years of age or older. Send photo or sketch and prices to: Albert T. Miller, 2235 West Live Oak Drive, Los Angeles, California 90028.