

**"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 Comment—

### We Commend Gravel

Senator Mike Gravel is to be commended for his plans to strongly oppose sea mammal legislation in Congress and as it came out of the U.S. House recently.

The House version of the sea mammal bill, if not changed, would wreak havoc among the coastal Eskimos and Aleuts on Aleutian Chain and Pribilof Islands. If the House version of the bill is followed, the Eskimos will not be allowed to use the skins of seals, oogrucks, bowhead whale baleen, bowhead whale bone and walrus tusks for traditional arts and crafts of the Native people.

The Pribilof Island Aleuts would be deprived of their jobs as fur seal harvest workers. If this is imposed, it would be the end of a lifestyle as known on the islands today. It would also make serious inroads, if not fatal ones, on the lifestyles as known on St. Lawrence Island, Little Diomed Island, Wales, Point Hope, Kivalina, Barrow and other localities. The bill as it stands now is a real threat to the way of life of a great many Alaskan Natives. Something has to be done either to make it acceptable to Natives or kill it.

Last Friday in Washington, D.C., Senator Gravel told the press that he was "prepared to take some very extreme steps" and that he might even filibuster against the sea mammal bill awaiting action on the Senate floor, if it does not provide for the interests of Alaskans.

Mike Gravel is showing a courageous attitude against a bill that could be passed without getting full knowledge of the situation of the Alaskan Natives in relation to their lives enhanced by the presence of numerous mammals they have always sorely needed. We hope that Senator Gravel will be heeded by his colleagues in the Senate so that meaningful amendments to the bill can be made.

We commend Mike Gravel for his courageous intentions.

## Editorial Comment—

### Sea Mammal Hearings

As one faction of many who expressed deep desires that additional hearings be held in strategic places on sea mammals, we are heartened the U.S. Senate is to hold hearings in Nome and Bethel, perhaps at another place also. This is a fine move on the part of the Senate. The results of the hearings should provide avenues of understanding for the lawmakers presented by the people who know the meaning of mammals to the Alaskan Natives.

We are also grateful that willingness to listen to Alaskans prevail in the Senate. This is the way it should always be because involvement of the people themselves in the enactment of laws should insure good benefits for the people.

## Letters from Here and There

Congressman Nick Begich  
Alaska  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

April 20, 1972

Mr. Lew Williams, Editor  
Ketchikan Daily News  
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Dear Mr. Williams:

In the debate that has followed House passage of the Water Pollution Control Act, certain misconceptions have been created which merit comment. Because this legislation is so important and so complex, I hope I can add some additional perspectives for consideration.

The most disturbing aspects of the debate are the claims that the House version of this bill is anti-environment, and that it is immeasurably weaker than the Senate version passed earlier. Although all statements of this nature are suspect by virtue of their generality, I believe there are some important specific considerations as well.

To say that either the House or Senate bill is anti-environment or pro-industry is no less than nonsense. Both bills represent the strongest, most comprehensive water pollution measures ever to emerge from each of the respective Houses of Congress. From the beginning, the goal of each chamber was to create landmark legislation in response to a clearly recognized national water quality crisis.

The Senate bill was completed first, and the House Public Works Committee had the benefit of examining the Senate bill while preparing its own. In doing so, the House chose to follow concepts which were different than those of the Senate. I would like to explain some of these differences, as they are often the basis for the "stronger and weaker" comparisons of the bills.

One difference most often mentioned is that the Senate bill sets absolute deadlines of 1981 for having all water suitable for human use and 1985 for complete control of all pollution. There was strong pressure, especially in a political year, for the House to make the same absolute promise as the Senate. I can only say that after having attended nearly 100% of the hearings, and having heard scores of witnesses with diverse credentials, I believe such an absolute promise to be incapable of fulfillment. The House established the same dates and goals, and funded a massive research project by the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering to find whether or not these goals can be met and possibly advanced. The Senate bill provides for no such study. My belief is that, at a time when a total and conscientious solution is mandatory, promises must not be made without having the knowledge that they can be kept.

A second major conceptual difference is the role assigned to the individual states in water pollution control. The Senate bill assigned nearly total power to the Federal government for pollution control which, like the civil rights crisis of the fifties and sixties, is viewed as yielding only to Federal pressure. The House bill establishes minimum Federal guidelines, but places much greater responsibility on the states, on the theory that they can most sensitively address

their own pollution problems, perhaps at a level far above the guidelines. The House bill also provides more Federal financial assistance to states than does the Senate bill, and divides the money between states based on need rather than population. The House bill also establishes a \$100 million financing authority to help local communities to finance their pollution control programs.

These major conceptual dif-

ferences — the emphasis on and assistance for state and local efforts and the desire to make comprehensive findings in advance of making absolute promises — are the major areas of debate. I believe that the House concepts are preferable, quite frankly, but I do not say that they represent methods which are more or less environmentally sensitive than those of the Senate bill. Each bill represents

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## Guest Editorial—

### Donald R. Wright

Let's face it: there are major elements within the Alaska Federation of Natives who are trying to dump Don Wright.

Let's take a look at his record.

When he came into office, the best we had was 10.5 million acres.

Certainly his worst enemies cannot contest his major contribution in raising it to 40 million. His friends give him gigantic credit.

Others helped, too, but who among us, for example, can call the White House staff and get an immediate appointment? He can.

Only lately, in spite of these efforts to clip his wings, almost single-handedly, he got Wildwood Base for the Kenaitzes.

Supposing he had real support instead of these snipings, I think his effectiveness would be magnified.

The regions are, of course, autonomous: If some fear him, is that a reasonable reason? What harm can he do the regions? We got the regional concept because he — and others — supported the idea.

Supposing these enemies succeed, what then?

I foresee that Congress will grab the Technical Amendments bill and run roughshod over us. I believe there are some regional leaders who have never heard of the new Aspinall bill (the Senate has one, too).

The Technical Amendments bill is supposed merely to clean up such things as typographical errors.

That bill does much more. For one thing it destroys the "free floating" quality of our "in lieu" selections, requiring them to be compact so we can checkerboard our withdrawal area and requiring them to be as contiguous as near as can be to our villages so we can't get distant land.

The bill does other things as hurtful. But the point is if the AFN becomes a shambles by these continued attacks on Don Wright, the Congress will think that there is no effective organization to hold the Congress accountable.

I think, too, that the Secretary of the Interior won't listen to us as earnestly as we would wish in problems relating to land withdrawals, organizing regional corporations, enrollment, etc., etc.

I hope those who oppose Don will reconsider, because I think they are hurting themselves and the rest of us.

So be it.

— Frederick Paul

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