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ESKIMOS AND OIL

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HISTORIC ESKIMO CONFERENCE COINCIDES WITH OIL PIPELINE OPENING

In the destruction of the traditional Eskimo way of life, the discovery of Arctic oil is completing a process begun by whalers, the gold rush and trappers. What remains to be settled is the terms upon which the destruction will take place. There the Eskimos are putting up a vigorous and reasonably skillful struggle.

In particular, in the week of June 13, for the first time in history, Eskimos met from the three Arctic rimland countries to which they migrated from Asia thousands of years ago (Alaska, Canada, and Greenland) to produce a charter encompassing their common interests. And on June 21, just as Arctic consensus had begun to flow, so did Arctic oil — the 800-mile Alyeska pipeline from North Slope Prudhoe Bay to Port Valdez in southern Alaska.

Besides oil, a number of other issues are preoccupying the Alaskan Eskimos: the future of the caribou and the whale, which they traditionally hunt, and the accessibility of the Arctic to non-Eskimos — accessibility they rightly fear. Meanwhile, the land and financial settlement by which American Eskimos sold their aboriginal rights provides continuing problems of management.

Inuit Circumpolar Conference

An FAS member had suggested, on May 17, that I might be welcome at a forthcoming Inuit Circumpolar Conference as an expert adviser. (Inuit, I learned, is the Canadian name for Eskimo; Inupiat is the Alaskan name. Both stand for "The People.") He had in mind the possibility of expert advice on Arctic nuclear problems.

Determined to cram on Eskimo affairs, I visited the Senate Commission on Indian Affairs, which has jurisdiction not only over Indians but also over Eskimos and Aleuts (all three groups of natives are represented in Alaska). There an Indian staffer said that I must meet the Eskimo Charles Edwardsen, Jr., and promptly put him on the phone. I heard him advise Mr. Edwardsen that FAS "could be useful" and was unprepared for what happened next.

In rapid-fire pre-emptive conversation, the 33-year-old Mr. Edwardsen told me in no uncertain terms that he had heard of the possibility of my attending, that they had no need of white men "pontificating" about Eskimo matters, but that, if I wanted, I could attend as an observer. Taken aback by my first exchange with an Eskimo and wondering if they were all as blunt, I invited him to FAS for lunch the next day.

It was worse. Polite questions were returned with "None of your God-damned business". When I asked whether it was not true that the number of persons in the Eskimo regional corporation was, in any case, public information, I was advised "yes but only if one digs it out". (It turned out later not only to be public information but well known). I turned the other cheek so many times my head was swiveling.

When his associate Dale Stotts arrived to join us, I got the first clue. To Dale's "What are you fellows talking about?", Charlie said: "Just feeling each other out."

My interest in Eskimos piqued, I laid low, passed the test, and in due course received an invitation "as an observer". But who was Charlie? I later learned that he was the subject of two books. A wholly authorized biography described him on the book jacket as "the Eskimo Malcolm X", a militant mystic believer in the minority's past and future. (I later discovered he could be friendly also).

Edwardsen's history was mingled with the greatest recent event in Eskimo history: the Congressional passage of the Native Land Claims Settlement Act of 1971. In that act, Congress agreed to give 60,000 Alaskan natives living in 225 villages a total of 40,000,000 acres and $1 billion if only they would give up their claims — as aboriginal inhabitants of Alaska — to any further special share in Alaska.

Edwardsen's generation of natives was the first to reach Western-style political consciousness. They had first learned they had positive power when they successfully resisted the notion of an underground nuclear test at the Arctic Eskimo town of Point Hope. The discovery of oil in the Arctic — their Arctic — had further galvanized their efforts. "Native land-claims" had become a cry that could not be ignored. The Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, had helped by freezing oil leases and State land selections until the native claims had been settled.

Alaska has only about 400,000 persons — the population of San Jose, California. Barrow, where the conference was taking place, is 800 miles north of Anchorage, on the North Slope of Alaska bordering the Arctic Ocean. One flies over the Alaskan range (featuring Mount McKinley, highest point on the Continent), stops in Fairbanks,

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ARCTIC SCIENTISTS NEEDED

FAS scientists with views and/or expertise in problems discussed within are encouraged to communicate with the FAS office with a view to our making use of their knowledge. These issues include: Arctic oil, whales, caribou, Alaskan native lands issues, protection of the Arctic environment, etc.

The October issue will be devoted to animal rights and their interaction with issues of science and society.

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and then flies over the 8,000-foot Brooks Range into the Arctic. Looking down thereafter, one sees what looks like an immense mud flat peppered with lakes so close and large that they are almost interconnected. Under the lakes lies the permafrost — frozen gravel and water down to a depth of 2,000 feet. Over the permafrost is that thin, ecologically fragile layer of tundra upon which very little can grow.

Barrow is the largest Eskimo town in Alaska and the richest native town in the state. It got that way through Eskimo shrewdness. When Barrow's leadership heard that oil had been discovered 200 miles east along the Arctic Coast, it sought a means of taxing the equipment. Barrow civic leaders thereupon formed a suitable borough (or county) extending across the top of Alaska from east to west (including an area equal to that of California, Oregon, and the State of Washington).

Barrow has only 2,800 persons and is really a town-village. (The entire borough has only 5,000). Barrow is mostly composed of a few hundred shacks constructed on stilts without running water or toilets. Stilts are necessary since the warmth of the house would otherwise melt the permafrost and lead to shifts in the house's equilibrium. A pumping system draws scarce water from lakes at 17¢ a gallon. Between the houses are gravel roads upon which refuse trucks travel picking up "honey buckets". Old and young zip around in summer on giant three-wheelers or Hondas.

Honey bucket truck in operation

In front of virtually every shack is a new, and an old, snowmobile. The new one cannibalizes the parts, when necessary, of the old. The snowmobile has completely replaced the dog team, of which only one is left; its owner, an old man of 70, occasionally releases a dog, to frighten off rock-throwing children. Otherwise, Barrow's only dog team mostly sits.

The big new buildings are in sharp contrast: the Top of the World Hotel, the all-purpose grocery store, the hospital built by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the school (complete with apartments for teachers so that, in winter, they never have to confront the real Barrow world of blizzards and 40-below temperatures).

The Eskimos themselves were unsure whether the conference would succeed. An airplane acquaintance specializing in Eskimo orthography had given the conference a "fifty-fifty chance" of success.

Her work in orthography is important. The key to retaining the Eskimo culture apparently lies in institutionalizing the language in which the traditional concepts can be expressed. The local teachers have recently shifted from punishing children who speak Inupiat to encouraging them. (But the white school teachers do not themselves speak much Inupiat or make serious efforts to learn it.)

Most of the world's Eskimos are in Greenland (about 44,000) where their language shares official status with that of governing Denmark, and they seek home rule. The 18,000 Eskimos in Canada are seeking to repeat the success of the Alaskan Eskimos in a Canadian Land Claims settlement. Alaska itself has about 11,000 Eskimos. There are also believed to be about 2,000 Eskimos in the Soviet Union, but these were not permitted to send a representative to the conference.

Sunday Arrival

The Top of the World Hotel charges $80 a day so we moved after one night into sleeping bags for the rest of the

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week in the school dormitory. And to avoid its high meal tariffs, we decided on our day of arrival to lunch at Barrow's other "eatery", Brower's Cafe. No luck — a full lunch was $10 a plate.

There were four of us at the lunch table, including one Eskimo participant, Theresa Pederson. She persuaded the State Senator, Eskimo Willie Hensley, who was passing by, to sit with us, and the discussion turned to the problems of the native land claims.

Under the act, twelve profit-making regional corporations of natives were formed to receive the settlements. Any person who was ¼ native was eligible. (One cynic said that some of his white friends had promptly "gone native".) To give the corporations a chance to get started, their land was to be free of taxation for twenty years. And to protect the natives from losing control, it was not permitted to sell the corporations' shares for 20 years.

Both of the latter provisions were causing problems. The state was conveying title to the native corporations too slowly to permit development. The natives thus were losing the twenty-year developmental head start that had been intended. If taxation began on schedule, lands could be lost. It was not clear also that the twenty-year moratorium on sale of shares was sufficiently lengthy to protect the natives against being bought out by whites later.

On Sunday evening, the major Eskimo participants met in intense discussion with Sam Raddi, the blind leader of the Eskimo land claims movement in Canada. It was obvious that there was concern over whether there should or should not be a charter; the mayor had a draft and felt strongly, as did others, that there should be some kind of charter produced. The visitors felt leary.

Food and Management

In Barrow, there is no nightfall for 82 days in the summer. Feeling a late-night hunger, we discovered, through the enterprise of a *Washington Post* reporter, Bill Richards, that the grocery store was open until midnight, and we explored its voluminous supply.

Food prices are about 300% of those in Washington, D.C., and yet the store still loses money. One reason is the debt service, since it is enormously expensive to build structures in the Arctic. Part of the reason lies in $7-or $8-an-hour wages for checkers. One knowledgeable observer said the store was just too big for the town. For whatever reason, the citizens of Barrow were not likely to get the benefit of reduced prices, since the new management was motivated in part by being paid a percentage of profits! The hotel was also losing money.

In general, management problems bedevil the twelve native corporations set up under the Land Claims Act. They have tended to invest their annual partial payments of the $1 billion settlement in Alaskan operating companies: hotels, investment companies, banks, etc. The natives want to share in Alaskan growth and to provide for the future. Nevertheless, most native corporations are losing money. Only four of the twelve regional corporations made profits in 1975. And six of the eight that lost money each lost more than any of the others had made in profits. In that year, the Barrow-based Arctic Slope Regional Corporation had lost 763 thousand dollars, or ten percent of its total assets.

One justification for the losses is the fact that new investments can be expected to pay off later. But it is widely bruited about that the natives lack the management capacity to either run or oversee the investments profitably and that managers sometimes cheat them.

Eskimo delegate Pederson (Photo taken at 11:30 P.M. by the light of the midnight sun).

Life In Barrow

In the summer, Barrow has temperatures ranging from about 20 to 40 degrees. But in the winter, 10-15 foot drifts of very dry snow freeze solid into a mixture resembling styrofoam. For months, the sun does not rise. The temperatures are so low that, in a bad year, it can be -55 degrees for weeks running. But the worst problem in the Arctic is the wind. For example, below 10 degrees, at winds of 20 miles per hour, flesh may freeze in one minute.

The year in Barrow takes on the aspect of one long day. In the summer, adults and children are up at all hours enjoying the sunlight. In the winter, they function indoors. Every house has a color TV set, and endless hours are spent before it.

The major social problem, by far, is alcohol. The Eskimos drink it rapidly and with great abandon like frontiersmen in Wyoming 100 years ago. In some cases, the rapid chug-a-lugging of a fifth leads to prompt death because of the body's inability to metabolize so much alcohol so quickly. In Juneau, the Director of the State's Department of Alcoholism, Robert Cole, said that half of Barrow's population (and even entire towns in other native regions) abuse alcohol. Startled, I demurred that the town had, one year before, voted itself dry by a narrow margin and abolished the city-owned liquor store. He responded that some of those voting against alcohol did so because of the enormous profits that could be earned by bootlegging liquor at $30 a fifth in supposedly "dry" towns.

Meanwhile, the Chief of the Department of Public Safety attributes 95% of all Barrow crime to alcohol and produces graphs to support his contention. Boredom and week-end binges encourage the drinking and the 15- to 25-year-olds produce the crime. Violent swings of emotion, and great hostility, characterize many drunk Eskimos. (Ordinarily, Eskimos are courteous, friendly, and alert to the social needs of others.) The major reason why the town had voted itself wet again (by six votes) in 1977 was that the town received 75% of city revenues ($500,-

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000) from the town liquor store. At least during this period, alcohol had been priced out of the reach of many young people. (When the liquor store had reopened, there had been a binge; even bank loan delinquencies went up.)

The Conference Opens

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference opened with a Christian prayer, watched with interest by a panel of observers from several Christian denominations.

The Eskimos have been heavily influenced by missionaries. The United Presbyterian Church had early given $95,000 to the Arctic Slope Native Association to help it fight for land claims, and when the Borough needed funds to get through its first year it gave another $150,000. There are only a few Eskimo religious leaders (shamens) left and the old-time religion was underground and oppressed.

The vast majority of Eskimos would say today that they are Christians. In Barrow, about 10% attend a presbyterian church and about the same number attend a pentecostal "Assembly of God". But one missionary obviously had qualms about the effect the church had had in disrupting the old culture. He said, "Their souls have been saved, but the people have been destroyed."

At the conference, Willie Hensley presided and the mayor got a warm hand and gifts from both Canadian and Greenland delegates. After the delegates had been individually authorized to take their seats, one participant addressed the conference as follows:

> "When Alexander the Great was conquering the known world, we were conquering the unknown world. The Inupiat are the most loving people in the world. We have been under five governments and never created any problems. We were here yesterday, are here today and will be here tomorrow."

Arctic Economics

When the conference took a break, I talked to development planners. The Borough is much like an underdeveloped country, with primary resources to export (viz., oil at Prudhoe Bay) but with a tremendous need for imported finished products.

So long as there is oil in the ground at Prudhoe, the Borough can tax the Prudhoe infrastructure above ground. However, if the oil should run out, the infrastructure would become worthless and, in particular, untaxable. Thus, from the Borough's point of view, the slower the oil is extracted from the ground the better. (At high maximum production, the existing reserves at Prudhoe Bay could be depleted in 10 years; at a slower rate, they will last 20 to 25).

Whether and where more Arctic oil will be discovered is a hot issue. Basically, the Federal Government chose the most likely spot for oil in its Naval Petroleum Reserve Number 4 (PET 4), on which the city of Barrow actually sits. The State of Alaska has also selected state land within the Borough with oil productivity in mind. As a result, the land selected and received by the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation is rather less likely to have oil under it. One observer suggested that the chances were only 5% of a big Arctic native deposit. But, he noted, a deposit as big as Prudhoe would, if found on Eskimo-owned land, provide each and every Eskimo with $250,000 in income each year.

Some Greenland Eskimo delegates participating in the Conference

The problem in the North Slope Borough is to create some kind of industry. Tourism is represented in the creation of the Top of the World Hotel. Native crafts is a possibility except that very few natives are engaging in it. (The shops are full of mass-produced native crafts from Alaska proper but only a few residents seem to make native artifacts, and even these are stylized and often made from ingredients purchased elsewhere.) The ivory and baleen (whale "tooth") artifacts and the the furry slippers, have got to be the most expensive native crafts in the world. At the level of Barrow's inflation, it is especially hard to imagine creating an industry of any kind that could sell, when incomes are so much lower on the "outside".

On Monday evening a marvelous play in the round was put on by four actors of the world's only Eskimo theater, the Tutak Theatre, based in Denmark. The play symbolized the fall from grace of Eskimos that had put on the mask of the white culture; they were freed from degradation only by throwing off the mask and returning to the old ways.

Whales

The conference proceeded to adopt a pattern of desultory public activity interspersed with private sessions. The Eskimos prefer not to be overheard as they develop a common position. Leaving my wife to take notes and monitor activities, I went to interview a local senior citizen on the problem of whaling.

Bowhead whales, weighing a ton a foot, pass Point Barrow twice a year, migrating east in the spring and west in the fall. Since the mid-thirties, commercial whaling of bowhead whales has been prohibited, but, by special exception, natives were permitted subsistence whaling. (This exception was withdrawn on June 24 and will be discussed in the Oct. PIR.) Last year, the Eskimos of the North Slope had taken 48 whales — small potatoes compared to the takes of commercial whalers with regard to other kinds of whales, but far more than usual on the North Slope. It was not known how many bowhead there were. Speculative estimates suggested 1,000 to 3,000. In protecting the bowhead against extinction, a serious problem arises in those whales destroyed whose bodies are not captured. For every whale caught, one or two or even more, depending on one's estimate, are destroyed but not captured. Thus, as many as 150 or more out of as few as 1,000 whales might be killed annually at this rate. In this case, problems of extinction could arise.

I learned how the whales are taken and what may be a

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possible partial solution. Traditionally, Eskimos killed whales by rowing out to the whale in a boat and attacking it with a harpoon attached to a float. The first whaleboat to "make fast" to the whale with a harpoon was adjudged its owner. The float prevented the whale from decisively submerging.

Today, a shoulder gun permits firing a preliminary charge at the whale from some distance. Under present rules, the first whaleboat to place its charge, via shoulder gun, on the whale is considered its owner. This encourages each whaleboat — and the sometimes nervous and excited crews — to fire at a whale as early as possible, often when the whale is effectively out of range. The charge may bounce off or only wound the whale. In the process, whales are killed but not caught.

The shoulder gun should be banned. At the very least, ownership of the whale should be restricted to whoever *first makes fast to the whale by harpoon.*

Naval Arctic Research Laboratory

Four miles down the road from Barrow lies the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory (NARL). The city of Barrow has no other neighbor in the Arctic.

Established in 1947, NARL is Navy-owned and operated by the University of Alaska under contract with the Office of Naval Research. It is designed to provide facilities for basic and applied research which might contribute to successful Navy operations in the Arctic regions, and it supports Government research in such fields as oceanography, meteorology, geophysics and biology, etc. For example, it has an animal research facility which, during the week, tagged a polar bear with a beeper that could be followed by satellite and put the bear back on the ice.

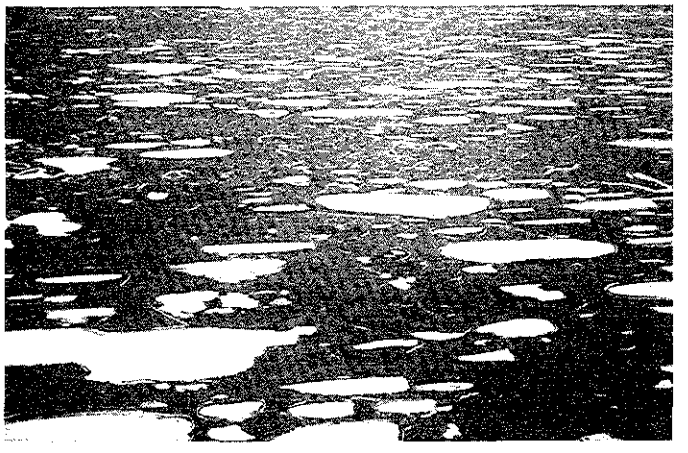
Relations between NARL and Barrow are edgy. The town asked for extra silverware to help host the conference and got it. But on a different occasion, it asked unsucessfully for the loan of some parkas. In emergencies, the base would help the town in various ways, but on everyday requests for assistance, the young base commander, Lieutenant Commander Dennis Christian, has to make Solomon-like decisions with regard to such criteria as "other availability", "competing with commercial interests", "misusing Government property", etc.

Besides these operational problems, some of the Eskimo militants — this really means Charles Edwardsen — want to demilitarize the base and, in so doing, encourage it to focus on Arctic problems of relevance to Eskimos rather than to the Navy.

Employment Problems in the Town

Part of the reason why Barrow looked so trashy lies in the problems of maintaining control over garbage during winter months. Trash cans blasted by heavy winds and blizzards, and explored by the local canine corps, spread their contents through snow drifts. The spring clean-up was progressing however. *In honor of the conference, the* town radio had announced to homeowners that half the $5-an-hour cost of teenage yard clean-up would be borne by the town. Each day it looked somewhat better.

The town's unemployment is about 11%. The Borough and the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, which are *the area's most important employers, want to hire Eskimos* first. But problems of reliability can result. The generator operator may be trained to run the power plant, for



Lakes dot the tundra

example, but when whaling season comes, he may drop everything. Worse, if bothered by the red lights that signal danger, he may unscrew them. At the restaurant of the hotel, girls trained as waitresses may fail to come in as expected in the morning (a party had occurred and led them to sleep late) and turn up in the evening as if nothing had happened.

Young people often have trouble deciding on careers: one day "heavy crane operator" looks good; another day, they may wish to be "an accountant". There often is no real understanding of the sustained concentration span and diligence necessary to learn a profession and hold a job.

The youngsters often have trouble also in trying to adjust to such "outside" environments as Fairbanks; they may call home after a few months and beg to return. A kind of culture shock is evident. In Barrow, one has the supportive features of village life, a tradition of partying, none of the slings and arrows of racist discrimination elsewhere, and a relaxed and undisciplined life. Sometimes the kids are hysterically afraid of cities; for example, on trips, they might leave the hotel only in large groups and struggle to avoid the subway. One is asking a great deal of the younger generation to jump the gap between Barrow and the Lower 48 urban scene.

Scientific Advice

I had been surprised to hear that a scientist from nearby Rockville, Maryland, who had been under contract to the town, was attending the conference. When I met him, he said he happened to have material he had prepared for the town, and he handed it to me. It was simply terrible.

One page contained four simplistic ideas for "future planning", including a) urging the town to live underground (no explanation of how this could be done in permafrost); b) urging that local energy be used to create local industry by producing chemicals, plastics, textiles and synthetic foods (no explanation of how this might be done despite many obvious difficulties).

Added to this were two pages of bad jokes and two pages comparing food prices in Washington, D.C. and in Barrow. (They showed Barrow items costing, on average, 255% more in September, 1976 and, ominously, 277% more only seven months later.)

The Borough being a public municipality with public records, I checked them. This scientist had received a contract for $20,000 (and later for an additional $15,000)

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to engage in a dozen or so tasks over the second half of 1976. Asked by a letter from the mayor what he had accomplished for these expenditures, the response was revealing. Little or nothing had been done on ten items, not much on another item. And on the request to undertake a study of possible hazards of Outer Continental Shelf drilling in the Beaufort Sea area, he had submitted a single page of conclusions.

As a representative of the scientific community, I was embarrassed. When I asked a representative of the town why it permitted itself to be treated in this fashion, he admitted the problem and said "Well, he's the only one who is ripping us off at present." Apparently, this problem is widespread in other native areas, as all kinds of persons put themselves forward as experts of one kind or another. But I suppose New York City is ripped off too, from time to time.

The Caribou

The Eskimos are concerned about State regulations restricting caribou hunting. They intimate that the pipeline may have caused some difficulty by inducing caribou to stay on one side or the other. However, the caribou migrate north and south and the pipeline, fortuitously, lies between the two ranges of the two large northern herds. The calving ground of the western herd is 300-400 miles west of the pipeline.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game's caribou goals in the Arctic coincide with the real interests of the Eskimos: "maximum sustainable yield". But they cannot agree on the facts. According to the Department, the western Arctic herd increased from 190,000 through the sixties and was reliably estimated at 242,000 in a 1976 photocensus. By 1975, there were no more than 100,000 and might have been many fewer. An "intensive" aerial search in July, 1976 indicated only about 50,000. Wolves take 10,000 to 15,000 per year.

The Department had, naively, hoped that the replacement of dogs by snowmobiles would at least relax that pressure upon the caribou which was represented by the need to feed the dogs. But the net effect seems instead to have been to give the caribou "no place to hide". The Department now believes it is necessary not only to restrict caribou hunting but to encourage hunting of wolves.

Inupiat University

In order to preserve the old culture, the North Slope Borough contributed more than one million dollars to establish an Inupiat University that would be Eskimo run and which would teach Inupiat language and culture and skills on the one hand, and some western business management techniques on the other. It was a candidate for accreditation when two of its leaders were indicted for embezzling its funds. Now it is struggling to retain its candidacy for accreditation (without which grants are hard to get). The "University" is clearly in a transitional state, and members who might be able to assist it in some fashion should write FAS.

On Thursday, there was a kind of Eskimo beach picnic at which three whaling captains celebrated their catch of a whale with a potlatch of caribou soup, whale skin (muktuk) and whale meat (both frozen and cooked). Muktuk is quite inedible by my standards.

A quiet, dignified whaling captain showed me his boat. The father of nine children — all of whom were bilingual except the smallest which spoke only English — he had returned from a hospital in Fairbanks to attend the ceremony, but would have to return. His elder children had helped support the family so that he could make a last-minute decision to organize a seven-man whaling crew with which he tried his luck for a few weeks. He seemed to epitomize the traditional Eskimo virtues of courage, sobriety, modesty and ability.

My wife and I adjourned for a "real" lunch at the hotel. The first waitress, quite young, who was clearing dishes, said she was "too frightened" to take our order; I began to realize that being a waitress could be a complicated task.

The Eskimo sitting at the counter on my right was a devout Christian attending bible school in Anchorage, which he found preferable to his former job of managing the village corporation in a small Eskimo village. He felt the Apocalypse was near. Alcohol was bad all over, he said. Enthusiasm for the church was high 20 years ago but not now. God, he observed, was the highest scientist.

It was so cold on the beach that we missed the traditional "blanket" toss in which successful whaling captains and others are tossed in the air on an Eskimo trampoline.

Children engage in blanket toss

Legal Services

The resident of Barrow most akin to FAS members in his approach to life was discovered in Mike Jeffery. A Yale law graduate, Mr. Jeffery had spent five years in India in religious retreat and then decided to use his law degree. He wound up in Barrow representing the Alaskan Legal Services Corporation. His clients were Alaskans who could not afford legal help. Thus, his beat extended from divorce cases to oil issues fought over by the legal giants. Inevitably, he accumulated enormous lists of issues for which he had no time.

Living in a one-room shack with his cot between a curtain and a bookcase of law books, he flew periodically, and often hazardously, to outlying communities to see his clients. He had already experienced a painful if minor taste of frostbite, and had taken an Arctic survival course in case his plane was downed.

We discussed ways and means of helping his clients through local Alaskan press coverage. His ready understanding of techniques FAS used in Washington persuaded me that he would develop into an ingenious and indefatigable ally of the Eskimos. He loved his clients and said the Inupiat were "very beautiful people."

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He told me with horror of an environmentalist who had tried to prevent the subsistance taking of whales and who said to him afterwards: "Now that your clients won't be able to hunt whales, I'll help them get on welfare."

Theresa Pederson and the Controversial Resolution

The major conclusion of the conference was to form a Circumpolar Inuit Assembly and to instruct an interim Inuit Committee to develop a charter covering such things as preservation of Arctic wildlife and resources; development and retention of Inuit language and culture; development of adequate transportation and communication systems; mutual exchanges on living conditions; and so on.

Controversy erupted into the open on only one issue: that of a nuclear free zone. Theresa Pederson has examined the Antarctic Treaty of 1960 which demilitarized Antarctica, and had drafted a parallel version for the Arctic. For some of the American delegates — Mayor Hopson was one — it was simply too strong, since it would have precluded U.S. bases in the Arctic, such as the nearby NARL and so on.

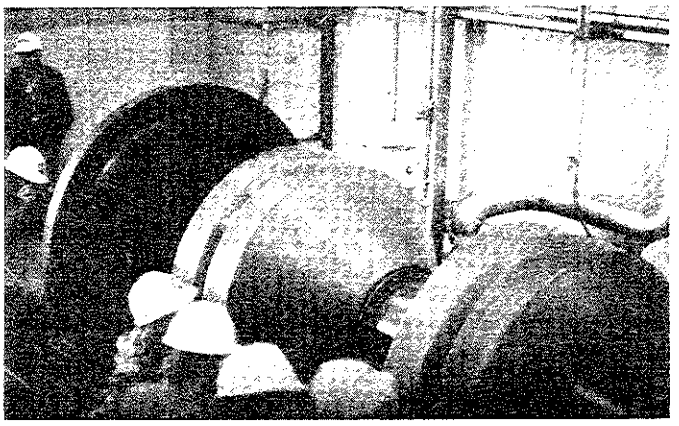
Ms. Pederson is a very intelligent young woman of glowing countenance. In her efforts to participate in Inupiat politics, she meets not only the problems that women confront everywhere but the special cultural barriers of Eskimo traditions, which were even more sexist than those of European descendants. She had narrowly escaped being squelched on this issue several times but was vindicated by the vote. The resolution being quite broad and far-reaching, it presumably includes some workable items of unilateral action (no dumping of radioactive wastes in the Arctic) as well as some negotiable items (no nuclear weapons emplacements on the Arctic ice, etc.).

Prudhoe Bay

I flew to Prudhoe Bay to see the pipeline open. Prudhoe has the largest oil field in North America, three times that of the North Sea, with about ⅓ of all U.S. oil reserves. The problem is how to get the oil to those who need it. Under present procedures, it is taken to the southern coast of Alaska (Port Valdez) by pipeline and thence by tanker to the West Coast. But there is too much oil for the West Coast to absorb, and no easy way to get it to the midwest.

Alyeska seems to have built the pipeline as if price were no object for two reasons. In the first place, it anticipated being limited to about 7% profit on total costs. Since it was investing only a small part of the cost and borrowing funds for the rest, it would reap larger rates of return if the total cost were larger. Also, the larger the charges made by the pipeline for transporting oil, the smaller would be the assessment of "well-head price" and hence the smaller would be the royalties to the State of Alaska. (Well-head price is the price of the oil in Los Angeles minus the price of transporting it there).

Management was triumphant and confident that the oil would move smoothly the next day (as indeed it did for the first 500 miles, until an explosion destroyed a pump station). The oil rushed out of the ground from 10,000 feet through the 2200 feet of permafront and emerged at a temperature of about 160 degrees. It began moving south at a mile per hour behind a restraining device called a "pig" while walkers monitored its progress along the pipeline by listening to the rachet sound the pig was designed to make.



The "pig" the day before its journey

At a drill construction site, a grimy workman greeted me with an interest born of boredom and observed that there were women on the press tour with me. Asked how long he had been here, he astonished me by saying, "I made it all but four days last year." When I observed that he must then be making at least $1,000 a week, he said: "Yes, after taxes."

Through The Narrows

Returning to Anchorage, we took the tiny but charming Alaska Railroad to nearby Whittier and boarded a ferry named after the late Alaskan Senator Bartlett for a six-hour cruise to Port Valdez, the southern terminus of the pipeline.

The Bartlett made a detour to within one-quarter mile of the enormous Columbia Glacier which may, in future, provide a hazard to the safe flow of oil. Glaciers, which are akin to frozen rivers of ice, tend to push in front of them gravel and rock debris. When the glacier meets the sea, this "terminal moraine" insulates the glacier from the warmer water. If, however, water gets between the terminal moraine and the glacier, the glacier may go into "catastrophic retreat". The Columbia Glacier might then emit — for thirty years in a row — icebergs a cubic mile in size. These would become floating hazards to the oil tankers crossing Prince William Sound.

With the mate's permission, we stood near the helm as the Bartlett passed through the famous Narrows into Valdez past that special hazard, "Middle Rock". Between the rock and the eastern shore, there is 2,700 feet. The tankers are about 200 feet wide and 1,000 feet long, and they must make two gentle turns of a few degrees to pass through the Narrows. Each turn requires, however, a rudder of about 10 degrees to get the heavy tankers started turning. According to a master of such unusual ships, the major hazard in the Narrows is not the width of the narrows but the rare possibility of a failure of power during such a turn. The ship, locked into a ten degree turn, would then collide with the shore.

A short flight away, at Cordova, the fishermen expressed alarm that oil spills in Prince William Sound may hurt the salmon. 25% of all salmon in the Sound spawn above the Port Valdez Narrows. Bob Blake, union spokesman, thinks the winds near the narrows are much worse than oil planners realized. What if tankers are kept out of the port for two weeks at a time? (The answer seems to be that the refinery can hold 7½ days' worth of oil before

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overflowing, and that the oil in the pipeline can be slowed for up to 28 days before freezing at the core.)

Blake thinks that an oil spill will occur only in really bad weather and that efforts to clean it up will be, in that event, impossible. He notes that much of the salmon spawn in intertidal waters into which tides would bring oil with catastrophic results. He wants full radar surveillance of the tankers, not only in the Narrows, but through their approach in Prince William Sound. One reason is to protect the fishermen from collisions with the tankers.

Alaska and the North Slope Borough

The North Slope Borough can be understood only as Alaska's Alaska — it has all of Alaska's problems writ large. Where Alaska has low population density the North Slope Borough has one that is far lower. Where Alaska thinks of the Lower 48 as "going outside", this is precisely the terminology which the inhabitant of Barrow uses for going to Fairbanks and Anchorage. Where Alaska has a drinking problem 60% worse than in the Lower 48, the Borough has a still worse one. Where Alaska has the problem of high costs, the North Slope costs are still higher.

Alaska is short of the highly-trained manpower necessary to cope with its rapidly changing social needs, and with demands on its oil. But the North Slope Borough is coping heroically with an even smaller base of skilled personnel while living within the very eye of the oil shortage hurricane.

Above all, Alaska and the North Slope Borough share the problem of coping with wealth today and the possibility of poverty tomorrow. Both are caught in the syndrome of boom and bust so familiar to the old West.

The state has begun to cope with its problem through a "permanent fund" that will collect 25% of all royalties, rentals, severances, etc., from minerals. Holding them aside from general revenues, it will create an endowment that will reach $1.8 billion by 1985. Even this heroic effort to look beyond the present is clearly insufficient. ($1.8 billion is only twice the size of Harvard's endowment and when invested would provide only about $260 per person per year in the state.)

Legislation is now being considered to return excess income to the citizenry (Alaska, Inc., it is called) so as

Bob Blake — Spokesman for Cordova Fishermen

to slow the growth of social services. But already today, the state is spending $500 million each year more than it receives in non-oil revenue. Unless something startling happens, Alaska will spend its wealth and find itself poor as surely as will the Saudi Arabians.

The case of the North Slope Borough is similar. It may or may not find oil on its lands — probably not. And it can tax the oil infrastructures of others only so long as the oil is being drawn out of the wells. As the returns dwindle, so also will be dwindling the 20-year payout from the Native Land Claims Settlement Act. And with the termination of the payment will come the end of the special tax treatment.

Twenty years from now, the Eskimos of the North Slope Borough will meet a danger as great as any that have been faced in the long history of the Inupiat. Will they have devised fiscal igloos and fiduciary harpoons with which to protect and secure the financial wealth they need? Or will they be exposed to the changing financial climate in Alaska armed only with an addiction to expensive snowmachines and alcohol, having lost one culture and one way of life without having secured another?

The difficulties they face are sobering. But they have made unbelievable progress in the last decade in vindicating their rights and coping with the white man's legal and political system. If the Eskimos continue to learn at the same rate, they just might become the first native Americans to overcome the discovery of America by Europeans, 500 years ago. *—Jeremy J. Stone*

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