

The following are public statements provided at hearings held in Fairbanks and Anchorage the 17th and 18th of October 1969 prior to the passage of ANCSA. They provide the reader with some of the issues and concerns discussed prior to the passage of ANCSA.

STATEMENT OF HOWARD ROCK, EDITOR, TUNDRA TIMES, FAIRBANKS, ALASKA
(written)

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to say something on behalf of the Alaska's Native people and our land problems.

I am Howard Rock, editor of the Tundra Times, a Native newspaper published here in Fairbanks for the benefit of the Alaska's Native people and, also, for the benefit of the rest of the population of our state.

I was born at point Hope, an ancient village in the far northwestern corner of Arctic Alaska. I am a direct descendant of a bowhead whale hunting family who also hunted polar bears, seals, oogrucks, belugas, walrus, wolves, wolverines, and caribou, and who also fished for grayling salmon, tomcod, crab, and other fishes and crustaceans.

When I was a youth I helped hunt whales with my father and his crew. Although I was trained to be a hunter, I became sidetracked by the fledgeling school system the Episcopal missionaries started in my village. Since it was a touch and go affair then, because of high rate of turnover of teachers and difficulties of getting proper school facilities, I was in second grade for two and a half years. Due to the rapid turnover of teachers I suppose, my school record was not kept apparently. I didn't know the difference nor did my parents know the difference. I later caught up somewhat when the school system improved. I do recall, however, that I was probably the best second grade pupil because I could just about memorize every lesson.

I was curious about the white world and I went after education to try to find out what made it go on. In the process, I became an artist for which I apparently had talent. I also became editor of the Tundra Times without working for it – without training for it. The reason for that was because I talked a good deal about the need for a communications media for the Native people because their problems that were, and are, overwhelming in scope were not being publicized.

When the late Dr. Henry S. Forbes decided to back the paper late in the summer of 1962, he asked me to be the editor of it. I was overwhelmed because I have never written a newspaper article let alone being an editor. I vehemently made excuses to Dr. Forbes pointing out these shortcomings when he called me from Milton, Massachusetts.

"Howard," Dr. Forbes demanded, "I said I will back the paper under one condition – that you be the editor of it."

I began to feel alarmed that if I didn't accept, the Native people of Alaska would not have a paper. I fearfully and reluctantly agreed to be editor. I have, somehow, survived being one to this minute. It hasn't been easy but I am learning every day.

At any rate, the first edition of the Tundra Times came off the press on October 1, 1962 here in Fairbanks. Ever since that time, I have tried to guide it the best I could. It has been difficult to say the

least because we have had to tackle some of the most controversial matters. We have had to step on toes, and some of those were big ones, and they stepped on ours. We have winced many times but we struggled ahead and we were rewarded with steps from the federal government level to improve situations among our Native people. We are still trying along these lines.

Right from the beginning, in fact in the first issue, we mentioned land claims and historic rights of the Alaska's Native people. A couple of days before we came out with the first issue, the then Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall came to Fairbanks. He told Thomas A. Snapp, my assistant editor, and myself that he would work for the rights and claims of the native people. He said they were far too long delayed in being solved and that it was time to look the problem squarely in the face.

Perhaps one of the most significant efforts we have made in the Tundra Times was when we tackled the Pribilof Islands situation. As recently as 1950, the Aleuts of St. Paul Island and those on the neighboring Island of St. George were paid in kind for their work in harvesting Pribilof fur seals. They were paid like two cans of corned beef, a pound of coffee or two, depending on the size of the family, a pound of tea and some other items per week.

Although we hinted that the way the Pribilovians were not being treated in a democratic manner as early as our third issue, we went to work seriously on the situation late in 1963. We charge then that the Pribilof people were being governed by the Interior Department in semi-servitude.

We kept working on the problem until the late Senator E.L. Bartlett took the Pribilof situation to Congress. A bill was passed to correct the wrongs on the islands and it was signed by President Lyndon Johnson in Anchorage about two and half years ago. My understanding is that the Pribilof people are now well on the way of establishing their own way of self-government.

Along with this, the Tundra Times had headlined grinding poverty among our Native people – their terrible housing situation, their health and sanitation and the glaring unemployment among them.

Along with these, we pleaded for our people's realization of their political strength potential. We called for Native leadership when it was almost nonexistent. We gloried with profound satisfaction when one by one the Native leadership began to develop. I can say with deep conviction that our leaders who are now doing the job are more able than I ever hoped for. Without them, a hearing such as this one taking place here today would not have been possible.

Also along with these developments, we watched with satisfaction the emergence of Native organizations. We ran columns pointing out the importance of them – that the Native voice would be heard because of collective opinions. I believe at the present time there are over 20 Native organizations today in Alaska.

We in the Tundra Times are humbly thankful that the newspaper has had some part in the realization of what I have been talking about.

LAND USE

And now gentlemen, I would like to say something about the Alaska Native land use in the Arctic country as compared with land use in other states. I hope that what I have to say about it will help to clarify once and for all the difference in these uses because they are, indeed, different.

We are continually hearing people from other states say something like this: "Why do you need so much land?" To ask a Native person this question is akin to an insult. It is a silly question – an uneducated question as far as the Native man or woman is concerned. The Native person knows the meaning of his land and how much land his village needs to keep it alive with some measure of comfort and with some touches of luxury, the kind Alaska Natives consider luxury.

The farms and lots in other states as used there, always seem to wind up as criteria when lands are considered in connection with Native Alaskan peoples. This is absurd – an unrealistic view of those who have never seen how our people use their land.

The Alaska Federation of Natives is asking for 40 million acres of land in the land settlement. The Federation had originally asked twice that acreage and even then had thought that 80 million wasn't quite enough. The 40 million acres was arrived at as a compromise when the Interior Department representatives objected saying the request was too much.

The compromise was made painfully – reluctantly and for good reasons. When this was made, a Native leader said with emotion and with tears in his eyes, "I looked down at our great country on the flight from Juneau – that great expanse of beautiful land – and we have agreed to give so much of it away. We are, in a way, betraying our own people.

It has been that painful and still there are demands to whittle down the land area asked by our people to the fraction of the original areas asked.

The Native Alaskan peoples are enduring a painful period in their history. They are under great pressure and they also know the need for a settlement on a 100-year-old land problem – the need to have title to lands – the need for a working base, a development base so they can at last become a working partner in Alaska's development. This working base is what we are fighting for. We want enough of it so we can live without being cast asunder to grovel in the grasp of poverty.

A farmer in the states below us who has a 100 acres farm can live very well from the fruits of his land. If by some chance a situation develops that his state and the federal government began to demand that the two government entities took 90 acres of his land, the farmer would be in dire straits. Most of the land from which he was accustomed to make a living would be gone and the remaining 10 acres would hardly satisfy his usual way of living. The farmer's working base would be all but destroyed.

An Alaskan Native village can be likened to the farm mentioned but in this case, the village people, principally the hunters, collectively would be the workers of the land to support the village. Here is the difference:

One village in Alaska requires a huge area of land to adequately support the existence of its people. Hunters have to go deep into the land interior for a needed item in the settlement. A 100-mile trek in search of certain game can be a common occurrence. Fifty miles of travel for fine squirrel pelts for parkas is not uncommon. A like distance in search of fine furred siksikpuk is also done. Siksikpuk is Eskimo for marmot which has a rich, durable fur used for luxury parkas – a mark of quality for the Eskimos. That distance, many times, will be traversed to get the meat of the caribou, a food item used from time immemorial. The skin and hair of this animal is used for utility parkas and footwear.

Certain species of fished that abound in some far off river are sought. The seas about villages are

heavily depended on for seals, oogrucks, walrus, belugas, salmon, and whales.

And so an Alaskan village, whether it be in the interior of Alaska or on the Arctic coast – a dot on the huge expanse of land depends heavily on the land and sea around it. The villages have no corn, wheat or potatoes to harvest as do the farms in the other states. The hunters harvest animals from the vast land areas around them to support the settlement. This is the law of existence for the Native villages through ages past and which should remain inviolable at the present time because it has been a way of life – and it should remain a way of life into the remote future. You can not change a mode of living overnight – a mode of living that took ages and ages to mold.

The Native leadership and their people at the present time are on a mission of unselfish venture. They are laboring to provide a meaningful life for our future generations of Native Alaskans. If the land settlement happens to be satisfactory too, many of us will never fully reap the fruits of our labor, but, we will have realized that what we have done will mean a decent, comfortable life for our sons and daughters.

But we will also insist that our descendants work hard for its perpetuity to keep it a continuing blessing whether by brawn or mental efforts. We will insist on progressiveness without laxity. We will insist on laboring efforts and not allow our people to leach on the easy-way-out methods. We will insist that they earn the blessing with hard, honest work.

These things we will do, gentlemen, if lands we most revere are left to us in sufficient expanses so we can truly be a part of the development of our state without shame – without rejection.

Question: *In Mr. Rock's statement, I don't know anything about the whaling business, what is a bowhead whale hunting family? What does bowhead stand for?*

Bowhead is a large whale. My people at Point Hope catch those whales in the spring between April and May.

Question: *That is the name of that kind of a whale?*

That is the name of that kind of a whale and there are always sperm whales and other whales, of course.

Question: *I want to ask you a personal question. I don't think it has much to do with the hearings, because we have to accept conditions as they are, but you are one of these self-made men who has a lot of talent, apparently, and you have been able to use it very industriously for the benefit of your people. Admittedly there have been a lot of misdeeds as far as the Native people are concerned. Do you still think that the Native people would like to go ahead with what appears to be a new kind of life for them, keeping the culture of their own Native areas, but at the same time working into the new life that is now opening for the people of Alaska?*

I certainly agree with that, because I don't see anything wrong with keeping the culture, it is still contaminated and all that, and we can also still eat our Native foods along with that, and dance, and celebrate our Nation's traditions. I don't see why they clash, because I have seen them work. They fuse very nicely. I believe in time this will be a very charming culture developed from our Native cultures and they will fuse along into the Western culture. I believe that will be very charming.

Question: *Those who wish to will be able to continue to hunt and fish as long as they can, keeping in mind that more than likely, unless we change our ways as far as conservation is concerned, this mode of life is not going to be quite as productive as it has been heretofore, is that right?*

It must be, as you say, quite unproductive in time, I believe, because the hunting pressures are coming to Alaska, and, of course, we don't like it. But as the population grows I believe that the hunting pressure will come upon the Native people. They are very fond of hunting and they can get away from it. They also like the modern conveniences like Frigidaires and other things.

Question: *Electric lights?*

Electric lights.

Question: *Gas heating?*

Yes.

Question: *And a few of those, automobiles and snowmobiles, and all of this. But you think that we can bend all of this into something that is for the benefit of all.*

I believe it can be done by the people themselves without pressure from anybody.

Question: *Mr. Rock, when our committee was in Barrow yesterday, we were told that the last individual has left Point Barrow, they no longer have any Natives living in that area, that they have all moved into Barrow.*

Do you mean from Point Hope?

Question: *Oh, no; from Point Barrow. They have moved into Barrow, so no longer is there a village or even one Native living in what was historically the farthest point north in Alaska. Has the same situation developed around Point Hope? An airport has gone in there. Has the village moved in toward the airport and left its original village there, abandoned their homes and moved where they can find more modern conveniences?*

No. To answer your first statement there about Point Barrow, I believe in very old times, not too old times, they had very bad epidemics there and most of the people were killed off, and I believe they couldn't take care of the village by themselves any longer because the hunters were killed or died, and they moved into the larger settlement.

As for Point Hope, Point Hope is, I believe, one of the most ancient villages, it has been there from time immemorial, but erosion has driven it more inland, I mean, eastward, gradually, but it is still there. The old traditions, the old songs are still there.

Question: *The reason I asked that is we had the same situation expressed to us in Nome from one of the islands about 90 miles offshore, off of King Island, there is no longer a Native living on King Island, they have all moved into Nome.*

Yes; they have all moved into Nome, and I believe the conditions there forced this one. When families moved into Nome then gradually the population decreased, of course, and there were no longer enough people for the Bureau of Indian Affairs to support the village. If it gets, I believe,

below 20, they don't run a school in those communities. But there was a movement into Nome and a lot of that was for educational purposes and a lot of it for employment. But I don't believe the King Islanders are very happy there at all, because their housing is terrible. I don't know how the schooling is. Probably it is much better than it was on King Island, I don't know. But, of course, the old-timers are still homesick, they want to go back to King Island, and many of the people are thinking the other way maybe, those jobs are more attractive on the mainland than they would be on King Island.

Question: *The reason I picked these two instances is to ask you, as a leader of your people, and one who has changed also, whether or not you feel this is a tendency in the Native villages all over the State, to change from the old customs into the new customs.*

The movement has a lot of glamour at first glance. I know of families who moved into Kotzebue and they are a lot better off than they were at Point Hope. Some families have moved away from Point Hope, but they come back eventually. Point Hope, by the movement of the people there, the population has been steady at about 375 people from a long time back. This is due to people moving out, people coming back in, and all that, and I believe it is gradually, because the economy of the village is much better than any other village except maybe Barrow in Alaska.

Question: *A little farther south we discover this situation. In Sitka they tell us that historically the Native caught salmon, dried them, used them for themselves all year long. Now they catch their salmon and everybody turns around and sells them or turn their catches in and have them canned. Then they go down to a store and buy it in a can for a dollar a can. We were told that they like it in a little can better than they did when they had it dried.*

I don't think that is quite true, because the Native people who grew up on dried fish never forget the dried fish. Even myself, when I was away in the States, after years and years of living out there, I craved for all the things I ate when I was a child and a young man. I don't think that is quite true.

Question: *That is true, but how about a group like these young folks here who are in school who have not know the old ways, what is to happen when they are your age?*

I believe the kids up there – they have parents who get Native foods from their villages, a lot of it is shipped in from outlying areas into Fairbanks – a lot of these kids up there know their Native foods and they also like them, of course, maybe a little less degree than their parents, but they do, a lot of them, like a lot of their own foods.

Question: *Does your wife go out and pick berries and dry them, preserve them? Do you catch fish and do the same, or have you taken on the white man's way, the easy way and now go down to the grocery store and Foodland and get yours?*

Are you asking me this?

Question: *Yes, as a pattern of general information.*

I have to do it. I also am invited by my relatives for Native foods, which I do once in awhile, but, of course, by working in Fairbanks and living in Fairbanks, where I do not do any hunting any longer, I buy groceries like everybody else.

Question: *If our educational system and the health standards keep improving, will not all of these old ways that you referred to disappear? The customs you keep, your dances you keep, the traditions of your people you keep, but do you keep the old manner of providing food for the family?*

It might be less and less as time goes on, but at the present time there is a strong liking and craving for the old Native foods. Of course, it might be lessening as time is going on, but at the present time there is a very great craving for seal and things like that, you know, and it will stay like this for a long time, because the people out there were raised on hunting traditions and, of course, the food went along with that. It is sort of ingrained in their system, I believe. They will not give up easily. If they do, it will be a very grudging surrender.

Question: *This is not for a question but for a suggestion. I agree with the other members of the committee who have expressed their appreciation of your coming here.*

I think the one thing that should be borne in mind is the fact that the land, if it is 40 million or 20 million, or 60 million, whatever it is, the purpose of the land is not to provide sufficient area for hunting and making a livelihood from hunting and trapping, but the purpose of giving title to the land to the Natives is for homesites, home communities, home areas. We couldn't possibly provide enough land for all of the Natives to live on a subsistence basis from this land, could we? ...My point is that there is no reason why they can't continue to use this forest land and what-have-you for hunting. They don't have to own it in order to use it. But your home community is the land that you want to own and build up, and improve your homes, and I think this is the purpose of the 40 million or 20 million or whatever it is

But those who want to continue to hunt and trap and so forth will be able to hunt and trap as long as they live and the legislation is not going to change that situation.

You see, we take Point Hope, for instance, the men there, although without too much education, happen to be aggressive in going after jobs. Therefore, the village's economy is very good, pretty good. Along with this, these men do seasonal work during the summer and in the winter they hunt, and they combine the two, the hunting economy and the wage economy, they combine these two and make a very nice living. They also use the huge area for going inland for caribou, 50 miles, 100 miles, whatever they need to get a certain item for the village.

Question: *And now this 150 or 200 miles to the east will always be open because it is Federal land. It will always be open for hunting and trapping for the people at Point Hope. Thank you very much. The legislation isn't going to change that.*

But we have need for custom hunting areas, we were given title to it, and not be left open like, you know, the Federal Commission or something like that. We don't have title to it. Maybe later on we would be subject to regulations and all that would restrict some of our hunters from hunting farther out from the village.

Question: *I just have two questions, Mr. Chairman. In the first place, I understand, Mr. Rock, that the Tundra Times, among the Native people of Alaska, is the best-read newspaper in Alaska. Could you tell us what circulation it has?*

We have a circulation of 3,100 at the moment, but we have a very large readership out in the villages. One paper that goes into a village might go to 15 to 20 families, so we can claim very much larger

readership circulation than 3,100.

Question: *You heard the question I put to Mr. Kito a little bit ago about the proposed dedication or a certain percentage of the money that is provided for each of these bills to the field of education at the public schools, grade schools, elementary, secondary, and college and trade school levels, with a requirement for matching by the State to assure that whatever amount was provided in the bill from Federal resources would be matched dollar for dollar by the State. Do you believe such a proposal would be one that would be acceptable to the Natives and one that we could expect participation by the State if it were so provided?*

I believe that it would be a very, very good arrangement, and I would also like to say that if the Native people of Alaska warranted such money they would be able to decide how much money to allot towards education of our children. The example is that the Tlingit and Haida Indians, on their own, after they were awarded about \$7 million, set aside \$200,000 for educational purposes.

I believe that if Alaskan Natives are awarded this, they would be able to handle a thing like this, and I believe if they would allot so much for education for a certain year, for 3, 4, 5 years or so, if the State matched it, it would be a very good arrangement.

Question/Statement: *Mr. Chairman, I would like to commend Howard Rock on his statement. I think the record would be incomplete if I didn't make the statement that the "Tundra Times", the paper that he edits, makes an enormous contribution to all of the Native community in Alaska. It is the organ of communication for all of the Natives of Alaska. The small circulation is really not indicative of the impact, because I am sure that every mature, adult Native in Alaska reads the "Tundra Times" and every issue of it.*

I think by his constant and prodigious work and his determination in serving the Natives he is recognized as one of the really great, influential men in Alaska. I think he stated it well before in another context. He said he would not likely benefit materially from the fruits of his won labors, from the fruits of his own dedication and enormous effort, but he does have a reward, because he has the love and affection of every one who knows him, and I think that this quiet and unassuming man is going to be a very important part of the chronicle that is going to be written about the land claims in Alaska. I think he has done a fine job.

Question/Statement: *As you know, we are considering three bills. One is the field communication bill, which provides for \$100 million for the cash settlement for the extinction of aboriginal rights; the AFN bill provides for \$500 million for the extension of these rights; and the Department of the Interior bill also provides \$500 million. Which of these amounts do you prefer and what is your rationale for assessing that value?*

I believe the combination of the Federal program and the latest AFN amendment bill, a combination of the two, with a retention of 40 million acres, would be well.

Question: *Directing your attention specifically to the cash amendments involved, do you prefer the \$500 million or the \$100 million?*

I would say I would prefer the \$500 million with more land than the Federal field committee would give the Alaska people.