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Face North: Joe Upicksoun speaks at Alaska Federation of Natives convention

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Notes: Original in 7-inch tape, master copy on CD. Produced by Roger McPherson. THESE TAPES WERE PRODUCED AS A PART OF AN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM NOW DEFUNCT AND WERE BROADCAST OVER THE RADIO FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.

The tape begins with short segment of drumming and then an announcer says that the program is "Face North, a program with Northern Studies." [Dog barking.] On December 16th-18th in 1971, the 6th annual [Alaska] Federation of Natives Convention re-convened in Anchorage. They were deliberating on the land claims bill that was passed by the Congress. Before delegations were taking a vote about whether they recommended the president to approve the bill or not Joseph Upicksoun, who is the president of the Arctic Slope Native Association, made a statement about the position of Inupiat residents of the North Slope. Eventually the recommendation was passed with 511 people voting for and 56 against it.

Under the provisions of the bill no sub-surface rights are granted to the residents of oil-rich Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 4 and due to a manner of land distribution based on population rather than on land-loss formula, Inupiat receive fewer benefits from the bill than other Native groups with larger populations.

Joseph Upicksoun introduces himself and tells that he is the president of the Arctic Slope Native Association. He says that as they pause for a few days and a chapter ends in their fight for self-identity and respect, another one begins.

He says that the northern people have lead happy lives for centuries. Western civilization sent its whaling fleets up there and now their whales are gone. Once they had plenty of foxes, but just like the departed whalers, the fur traders disappeared too. Now they have the oil. One of their advisors told them that an average life-span of a pool is 20 years and they suppose that the oil companies will leave within his lifetime, or at the latest, within the lifetime of his three children.

He says that the real invasion of their land was within the past 10 years. There will be perhaps 1,000 oil rigs in the north and perhaps 10,000 miles of road on his land. All of this means that their culture will be destroyed and that they will be in cash economy in the immediate future. He addresses “you, the organized Natives,” and says they almost made a fatal mistake and demanded money and nothing more for the extinguishment of their land rights. Inupiat Eskimos never wanted money as such, but they wanted land. Out of the land, they would make their money and protect their subsistence living and still have their heritage.

Alaska Natives are paid the settlement for one reason: because they have legal rights [to the land]. During the last 60 years, the only decent thing the Congress has done, as far as land is concerned, is to return the 48,000 acres of holy [unclear, possibly ground/territory] to the Pueblos.

5:36The Congress is making the settlement because of one reason: because the oil is owned by the Inupiat Eskimos of the Arctic Slope. They must look at the other ethnic groups in Alaska. A couple of years ago the companies wanted an approval for a pipeline, but the Inupiat Eskimos, Athabascans and the Chugach Eskimos had claims to the lands. Tanana Chiefs and the Chugach Eskimos were approached by Atlantic Richfield and they sold their lands to the oil companies for just a promise of jobs.

The Alaska Federation of Natives refused to provide leadership and the Athabascans and Chutgach Eskimos sold their birthright. They are getting paid faster, about 100 years faster, but the Arctic Slope Native Association said no. When the September 11th, 1969 sale by the state was about to take place, Inupiat Eskimos resented it because again people were invading their lands. They made a

lawsuit, but didn't choose to sue. They wanted to know how much their land, "not yours" [meaning land that wasn't other Native groups], was worth to Western Society. \$900 million dollars figure has captured the imagination of the world and the Congress can't afford to expose itself to the world by raping them.

8:12 The Inupiat Eskimo were proud to have helped "you also" [the other natives]. That much cash that was invested by the oil companies has, of course, increased the pressure in the Congress to settle the land claims.

Upicksoun says that now he must look at the Tlingits who didn't help form the AFN even though they have more than 200 college graduates among them. The rest of the Natives didn't really believe that they should be included at all because they had had their tragedy in 1902 [not sure what they are referring to here, possibly shelling of Angoon, possibly other land deals in Southeast] and they were about to be paid for their loss. However, they [Upicksouns' affiliates?] felt sorry for the Tlingit for getting only \$7 million dollars. They also still held an Indian title to a little remnant of their land, some 2.6 million acres.

He says he wants to examine what the Tlingits got out of the settlement: They teamed up with Southern Eskimos and demanded a division of the settlement that was based on population. So the Tlingits who started with nothing, ended up with 25% of the settlement.

Upicksoun says that their share of the settlement is tainted. Just one year ago, the Arctic Slope Native Association [ASNA] met with their board of directors. ASNA had withdrawn from "their" organization [AFN?], but they wanted ASNA back. Just one year ago ASNA and the AFN struck a bargain that most of the settlement would be divided by "Land Lost" -formula and they rejoined AFN. It took one month for AFN to break their promise. They got ASNA back because Arctic Slope oil has glamour and ASNA was needed. The southern Eskimos and Tlingits forgot that they would be getting paid because the ASNA had said "No" to propositions of money, to pipeline, to HR3100, to the proposition that they should sell their birthright.

11:45 Upicksoun continues that there is still another injury that they have hit them with: Cost of living difference. Using Seattle as a base of 100, cost of construction in Ketchikan is 125, in Anchorage it is 160, in Bethel 245 and in Barrow 365. A house that costs \$15,000 dollars in Ketchikan, in Tlingit country, costs three times that at Barrow. That is tied with the Population Proportion – scheme that so many people in AFN work for. How can they divide the settlement in such basis when Inupiat have to pay \$45,000 dollars for a home where as “the other guy” can get it with \$15,000 dollars?

Another thing that troubles Upicksoun in the settlement division by population basis is that for decades the society has made an earnest effort to help “you.” They have always had schools, salmon canneries and so on, millions and millions of dollars have gone into their areas and only a daft person would not know that the contribution to “us” by the society could be regarded as a complete neglect.

13:34 During WW-1, some of their established villages had no schools at all. This is a white man’s world in which Native people are supposed to compete. Upicksoun asks how greedy “you” can be, racing into the Western world with so many tools, and then “want to gobble us up.” A part of the world Upicksoun is talking about is the State of Alaska. Aside from Section 4 of the Statehood Act, the entire 103 million acres was just a gift, a donation. There is a difference between “our rights and our land” and what the state started with. “Ours was our birthright, hers was a donation.”

Upicksoun wonders about the integrity of those who support the state. Section 4 was a promise from the state government and her people that the each of them will forever disclaim any rights to Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo lands. The state is getting out of the North all the tentatively approved and selected lands. The selected lands were selected after the freeze and their selection was a direct effort to grab Eskimo lands with full knowledge of what they were doing. The Congress approved “this grabbing” and Upicksoun didn’t see any of the regional associations help them since they were too busy fighting for their Population Proportion scheme.

15:51 Upicksoun explains how the state got their superior rights: Senators [Ted] Stevens and [Mike] Gravel, and Congressman Nick Begich teamed up with Aspenol [sp? Aspenel?] and Hailey [sp? Haley?]. As an example, one of their historic villages where people are still living, Nuitsut, was secretly determined by Senator Stevens to be eliminated because it is 3 miles from the new oil strike. This they found out about a month or so ago. They reason that Senator Stevens is determined to make the land they get worthless. Governor [William A.] Egan is a part of that team, advocating that Natives should get [unclear possibly fee] simple rights in the Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 4.

Eskimos will not get state selected or TA lands, no petroleum no. 4 land or wildlife refuge lands. Thus, the only eligible villages they have are Anaktuvuk Pass and Point Hope. The men have made sure that the lands the Eskimos get have no economic value. They will get some land, but the restrictions on what they can select are so huge that they have to “do some real scrounging to make them meaningful.” As Upicksoun looks at the oil companies, particularly Humboldt Oil and Refining, Mobil, Atlantic Richfield and British Petroleum, he notices that they don’t pay a penny in property taxes in the North Slope.

Upicksoun explains how tax money could build schools: at Anaktuvuk Pass, Kaktovik, or Wainwright, there are no junior high schools, and at Barrow there are no senior high schools. They probably have 1,500 school children in North Slope and as they reach junior and senior high school ages they must be sent from home into a different culture. In 1969, the state got \$900 million dollars from “my land.” Her budget that year was \$154 million dollars and the next year, with the sale, the budget doubled and this year it’s \$296 million dollars. [Believe he is referring to the petroleum lease sales]. Not one additional penny was returned to Inupiat children and so they have filed a petition for a borough so they could tax oil companies for schools.

At 19:55 Upicksoun says that Humboldt, Arco, British Petroleum, and Mobil have formally announced their determination to oppose the petition. Humboldt deserves further mention since for some months now they have told in their TV advertisement that they paid the Tyoneks[sp?] \$12 million dollars for a dry hole.

They imply in the advertisement that they are a great friend of Indians and want to help them, but now it is evident that Humboldt opposes their children. It's a misleading advertisement.

Oil has not yet learned the lesson of OPEC countries: Just a few years ago Libya confiscated British Petroleum's property there. Upicksoun says they will need the borough for another reason: for the protection of their subsistence living since borough would have the power of zoning. Not that they would zone out the oil companies since Upicsoun believes it's possible to be compatible, but with the huge invasion coming to the North, there must be order. Without order, subsistence living will be destroyed and the discontent of their people will grow.

22:20 Upicksoun says he must talk about the pipeline, too. That spans possibly over 10,000 miles of feeder lines and 48-incher [pipe?]. If a feeder line breaks, his people will be hurt, not the rest of the AFN. The risk of break magnifies when the mileage of the line increases. They see it as 10,000 miles of risk and have therefore proposed that the oil companies pay them in case of a spill so they can provide substitute foods for their loss. If there is no risk of spillage, the oil companies could promise to pay them a million dollars per a gallon of spillage. Since no spillage would occur, they wouldn't have to pay anything. The idea that there would be no spills is silly because there will be.

Their proposal was submitted to Secretary Hickel [Walter Hickel, a Republican governor who later served as Secretary of the Interior in the Nixon Administration] and Morton and they dignified the request by silence. Not one person from AFN helped them either. It's their conclusion that the State of Alaska wants to steal their lands and pay the other Natives. The other Natives are happy to be paid out of Inupiat lands. The state is rich because of their lands and the oil companies want to build a pipeline to experiment over their lands. United States wants to provide for its own security against foreign enemies out of their lands.

Upicksoun says he is hurt, frightened, and bitter due to other Natives demanding more than their just share due to state grabbing what she could and by the Congress' incompetence in not understanding the problems of oil companies stepping on them as if they weren't people.

25:40 Their emotion now is sadness, but like people around the world who are faced with discontent, they must react and find some other ways to find their self-identity and self-respect. The social injustices can't continue. Upicksoun thanks the audience. [Applause.]

The announcer says that that was Joe Upicksoun, president of the Arctic Slope Native Association and the statement was delivered in December 18th, 1971, to AFN delegates.

Face North was produced by Roger and Karen McPherson, using the facilities of KUAC FM.

[End of the recording.]