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**Joseph Upicksoun gives a speech at the Alaska Press Club**

**Summary created by: Varpu Lotvonen**

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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.

Seems like the tape sides were switched on the reel and that the recording begins from minutes 24:09, first part of the summary being the end of the speech.

Joseph Upicksoun is giving a speech where he addresses non-Native audience, so in this context “you” means non-Natives and “they” means Natives, especially Natives of the Arctic Slope.

Joe talks about how they have had major meetings in high schools that are built by you for your children. They even have swimming pools. On one hand, you [the white people] take \$900 million dollars of Native land and on the other hand the Native people must demonstrate their love for their children by sending them away from home [to go to school]. If they don't have money, the children must stay at the school over vacations. They are bilingual people who speak Eskimo at home and English at school, but they don't have bilingual teachers for their first-graders. They are concerned about this, because it's hard for predominantly Eskimo language speakers to learn in English. The textbooks are often oriented toward middle-class America and the Natives think it slows down the educational process. They are entirely willing to learn English, but they also want to retain their Eskimo heritage for the sake of their self-identity. Society doesn't solve problems by destroying one culture for another. They think they can move forward on bi-lingual basis and that's why they want a borough and a regional high school. They will build it themselves, because they can't rely on Juneau.

2:58 Upicksoun asks if the press of Alaska has been a failure in helping the Eskimo children to get a meaningful high school education. They know there are some who are against a settlement that approaches fair value of the lands that is taken from them because, after all, they will waste it. Society has made sure that the Natives are poorly educated and therefore society shouldn't pay the Natives fair value. Upicksoun asks where the intellectual leadership is, that the press so fondly believes to be its role in the society.

Upicksoun brings up the issue of community development: They think that the state and federal governments are proud of the 25 homes that are being built in Wainwright. They are better than what they had before, but still, a family with 6 or 7 children is living in a box of 20x30 feet. It's not their idea of a modern home and they don't have water or sewage systems.

5:21 Out of the yield of the settlement, they will strive for quality, not the cheap things Juneau thinks are good enough for them. Finally, their third objective is business development. They have recently organized a federally chartered corporation as the business arm of the Inupiat community of the Arctic Slope. It includes all North Slope and all of the people. Congressmen authorized those business corporations as a transition from Native to Western culture. In a white man's society, they need white men's tools.

Creation of the corporation had to be approved by "our people," and it was ratified on August 6<sup>th</sup> by a vote of 541 to 18. They are a united people. The corporations have a congressional mandate to protect their minerals, including their gravel, and Stevens Village is such a corporation.

They have no assurance that out of the yield of the settlement, they'd get valuable acres. They have had to develop a team of talent to assist and advise them, not having any money to pay them, they have signed contracts with "these fine people" to pay them one dollar and the moral obligation to pay them reasonably if and when they can. It has been hurtful to them, because it's almost like charity.

The talent they have contracted with includes community development people from the University of Washington, certified public accountants, general economists, and social engineers. They have no geologists or geographers and so they have commissioned one of their friends to develop teams in those fields.

They've had as many as 4 lawyers working simultaneously, and they are aware that when the settlement is approved, they will have about 18 months to make decisions which will influence generation upon generation of their people. Under the House version [of the bill], they will get no money in at least one year.

9:27 They don't understand why they are expected to make wise decisions without the best qualified and best paid talent in the world. If they make foolish decisions, society will blame them. Upicksoun asks if the press was worried about that, and says it's no wonder they [the Inupiat Eskimo] got angrily amused as they watched from the top of the world as the state and the business community spent \$150,000 dollars on a trip to Washington D.C. when 150 of "you" tried to rush the pipeline permit. How much better it would have been to your self-interest to help the Native people? The greatest economic impact on Alaska will be a generous Native Land Claims Settlement. The more they get, the more you will profit.

Upicksoun says he has wondered about the so-called white backlash and his judgment is that Natives have thousands of friends in Alaska who wish them well in their fight for self-identity. He's going to give examples: Men like Robert Porter of Alaska Methodist University, or his great work at Presbyterian General Assembly of 1971. Then there is Fred McGuinnis [McGinnis?] and his lobbying through the National Council of Churches convention of 1969. Vic Fischer of the University of Alaska was helpful in getting the Alaska Federation of Natives a Ford Foundation grant. Bishop Gordon of the Episcopalian faith gave them a \$10,000 dollar grant. A particular mention should be made to Joe Fitzgerald who is a former staff of Federal Field Committee, David Hancock, Bob Arnold, Arlen Tussing, Esther Wunnicke and many others.

13:14 The Anchorage Daily News, under Larry Fanning and his widow must be honored as well. Upicksoun says he must tell something about his people. They are whalers. There is not a more skillful, dangerous, patient, and hardy occupation in the world than killing whales from a skin boat.

Translating that to their present problem, they culturally rely on themselves. They wish that you would help them, but in their fight for survival against the "bulldozer of western society" they intend to do what they believe is in the best interest of their people and for the rest of Alaska. Upicksoun supposes that the Arctic Slope

Native Association is presently a landlord and that oil seems so important that the United States are more worried about the oil than about the generation of their culture. They are not bitter about it, but recognize it. They are also determined that if they are about to lose their culture, they are going to have enough white man's tools that you won't destroy them and they can develop a decent substitute culture in their homeland. Their answer simply is that in the aftermath, they want to be the landlord in a new sense, and they are going to be. The ultimate source of all wealth is land.

Upicksoun thanks the audience and encourages questions. [Applause, break in the recording.]

17:05 [An indistinct man's voice asks a question about lobbying for land claims. The following segment is hard to hear.] Upicksoun says that their association has a lawyer and [unclear] director who are both in Washington D.C. in contact with staff who are presently in the markup session. The man asks if they are going to push heavily for a senate bill, or if they are satisfied with both of them. Upicksoun says that right now the bill is in the committee and that they will probably work on some amendments before the senate.

A man's voice asks Upicksoun's opinions about the pipeline resolution bill and the land claims bill. Upicksoun says that at this point, he hasn't had much information on the conservation movement, or the purpose behind them "doing this." The man asks if they have had any support from the conservationists and Upicksoun tells that they have.

The man asks if they have any minimum settlement figures that [unclear]. Upicksoun says they don't know just yet where the razor's edge is going to be. It depends on how the House and Senate bills are, and how the act [unclear]. If the senate bill will support the Alaska Federation of Natives' vision in four areas, they have some differences in distribution of land and money. Upicksoun is proud of AFN for becoming what they are today. [Unclear talking.] Upicksoun says that now when the four applications stand, there should be a local boundary commission hearing, but says that he doesn't know when it is.

At 21:25 a man's voice asks if present rural educational program is inadequate in Upicksoun's opinion. He says that as far as the Alaska State educational system is

concerned, they'd like to have more of the local communities or ethnic groups have input into some of the [unclear due to a loud buzzing sound] into the educational system in their own areas. For example [unclear due to buzzing].

The man asks if it's true that Natives get the first choice in the land claims selection. Upicksoun says that they are restricted to selecting lands around their villages, and only up to 80 million acres. That's for 60,000 Alaska Natives. [Unclear question.] Upickson doesn't know. Their executive director is doing some research on Step 4 and hopefully it'll have leverage in causing some [unclear].

A man asks where Upicksoun got the figure of \$15 dollars a gallon for penalty. He tells that they agreed to that figure because if there is any spillage, there's going to be quite a bit since it's a 48-inch pipeline that's 1-foot long. [Break in the recording.]

24:09 Upicksoun says that at least he doesn't feel alone and that he'd like to say something about their executive director Charlie Edwards, Jr.

Some time ago he and Upicksoun came to an understanding: Charlie is part Norwegian, and the Danish history will tell them that in year 1,000, Leif Erickson had settlements in Greenland. They had some problems since when Leif Erickson got back to Greenland, all he found was wild cattle and sheep. He reported back that the skraelings left nothing but those. Skraelings were early American Indians and Eskimos.

Upicksoun says he's delighted to be there even though he thought he wouldn't make it. He addresses Mr. Chairman, the members of the Alaska Press Club, and guests, and says that as the president of the Arctic Slope Native Association, he'll welcome the first invitation to speak to Alaskan public, to her business community, and to local and state governments.

As they talked internally, their board of directors and their advisors formed the conclusion that the Alaska Press newspapers, radio, television, and magazines were sharply critical of the Natives and their position in the settlement. The critical attitude is not so bad, because the press is supposed to question and to criticize in order to make public institutions responsive to the public need. You [the audience]

have done a fine job in criticizing Native people. The Inupiat Eskimos of the Arctic Slope have a story to tell the world.

28:17 For the last time, the United States has a chance to prove to her own citizens, and to the rest of the world, that her Christian morality is more than words. As an American citizen, Upicksoun worries about the honor of the United States. For several hundred years, the westward expansion has driven the Indians of the Lower-48 from their homes. That story has been told and retold many times; perhaps best in the recently published book *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*.

Nationally, their real strength is their national conscience. Nothing is settled unless it's settled right. The great worldwide powers have painfully learned that they can't run over weaker peoples to put in another [unclear]. United States is willing to pledge their young people so that one nation can't enslave another. Society has learned from the black problem that when minority groups are miserably treated, society itself is injured. The question before the Congress today is, if the Congress can measure up to the responsibility of settling the land rights of the Eskimos, Indians, and Aleuts on basis of fair value.

31:23 Upicksoun asks if the press has devoted any real attention to the honor of the United States and reminded the state government that the more the State gobbles up from the Natives, the less honor the United States and her people will have. They take courage from the Section 4 of the [Alaska] Statehood Act, which states that the State and its people agree that they forever disclaim all right and title to any lands or other property that might belong to an Eskimo, Indian, or an Aleut. So far in the fight for their land, they have concentrated on Washington, D.C. Alaska is not their arena and not their battleground. Nonetheless, they [the Native people] live in Alaska and "you" are their neighbors. That's why they have been disappointed by your conduct.

Upicksoun feels that the most people miss the basic point over whose land they are going to build the pipeline. That's the question, not economic development, dollar per day of state revenue, or conservation. Those are important questions too, but they sidestep the basic problem of land ownership. In looking at the press, they have concluded that the press has whipped up hysteria over the pipeline. As a direct by-product, the people "up here" over bought with credit, over sold, and

over spent on credit. All because of the atmosphere that everybody was going to be an instant millionaire.

35:26 Upicksoun says that if the Press had really understood the mood of Native people, it would have been more restrained and much hardship would have been avoided. People must understand that Western civilization didn't touch the North Slope until about 1965 "and then it poured in like a gusher that drowns everything." This rampant development inflamed the Eskimo. Even today they have no assurance that the Congress will pay them a fair value for the extinguishment of their right in their lands. They are aware of Adam Smith's law that land is the final source of all capital.

As far as land is concerned, the only thing that the Congress can boast about is that it is returning the 48,000 acres of holy Blue Lake to Taos Pueblos in 1970. They have formed a conclusion based on their reading of history, that there are many in the Congress who would pay just as little as they can get away with. For United States' national honor, Upicksoun wishes that you" would join them in protecting that honor. They would still welcome "you." There's another reason too. It's in your self-interest to support their program.

38:50 Upicksoun wants to look at the exploitation of resources of Alaska over the years. More than 100 years ago, there were fleets of 150 or more whaling ships up at the Arctic Ocean. They destroyed "our whales," gaining the profit [while impoverishing Native people.] They also had hoards of people coming for gold, destroying "our creek beds" and "our peoples," [while only profiting the White people]. The salmon is no more, which is the next example. Their entire salmon cannery was formed [unclear]. The fishermen made something but the great fortunes were not made by Alaskans. Alaskans who made money promptly left and took their money with them.

A whole mountain of copper was taken from Cordova and Cordova is now a nice little village, but the profit from copper is nowhere to be found. Timber is now being exploited, but Upicksoun says it's not by Alaskans either, but by New York, Boston, and Chicago, who have reaped the real wealth from Alaska. The Kennicott Copper Company, the Fairbanks Exploration Company, the Alaska Packers, and

others have been the landlords while Alaskans have been the sharecroppers and tenant farmers.

At 41:34 Upicksoun addresses Mr. Chairman and says that Inupiat Eskimos are going to be landlords after the settlement, not sharecroppers. Now they have oil. They can learn from the previous examples of exploitation. The real backbone of Alaska industry is Native ownership. They don't leave because Alaska is their home, and instead of concentrating on Native ownership, the Alaska Press has given the public the idea that the pipeline is the answer for their economy, a panacea.

There will be a construction crew of 5-10,000 people for two or three years, and a permanent crew of 300 people. Speaking of the pipeline, they need to talk about environmental protection. No matter how competent Alyeska engineers are, there is always the human factor. Recently, two sailors in Puget Sound forgot to check the valves, and 5,000 barrels [of oil?] were pumped into the sound. That's 210,000 gallons. One of their worries is that a spill will occur and that their subsistence life will be in danger. Their legal advisors tell them they don't own wild animals and can't sue for their destruction even if their subsistence living will be injured. They have proposed that the Native regional corporations should be paid \$15 dollars per gallon of spillage so that the association could replace subsistence living with substitutes to its people.

44:49 Upicksoun continues that as they, the Inupiat Eskimos look at you, they wonder about the depth of your study. In February 18-19th in [19]71, they published a formula from a testimony of their executive director Charles Edwardson, Jr. at the environmental impact hearing. Upicksoun says that they are getting no support from Alaskan sources for "this worthy recommendation." They think that if the oil companies would have to pay in case of an accident, they would be twice as careful.

One of their basic concerns is that they love the North and like to live there. It's generous: the sea, the rivers and the tundra. Their advisors tell that an oil field has an average life of 20 years. "What then?" asks Upicksoun. There will be huge social problems, "huge garbage" will be there for the Eskimos to inherit, and their culture will be changed. They have to deal with those problems and Upicksoun



says he doesn't have any answers. He has worries, however. There are large figures being pushed around, such as 40 million acres while they have no assurance that they will get good acres.

47:37 If, and when, the bill is signed by the president, it is the official policy of the Arctic Slope Native Association that their share of the yield will be used first for education, secondly for community development, and thirdly for business development. Education is number one priority. Vocation and college training is of course needed but more importantly, they need regional high schools.

[End of the recording.]