

*Personal*DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF EDUCATION
ALASKA SCHOOL SERVICEFeb. 10, 1916SCHOOL, Wainwright

Dear Mr. Shields:-

You will be in a great rush when you get this so I'll try to make it brief but it will contain facts that will bear a second thought when you have more leisure.

Two days ago we got a letter from Mr. Richardson telling us about the Fair. Your letter was brought to him by Mr. Gudmundson. When neither of ~~you~~^{us} got word from you in the last mail concerning it we of course gave up all that of it and if your Eskimos down there are like ours up here you will know that they have a habit of putting everything off till the last minute. The reindeer herd is a long day inland so it took two days to get the boys here and we will start them with the Barrow boys when they arrive. I have sent word to Jay Cape

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for one of them to go but they have not shown any desire to do so, and in fact there are only two who could possibly leave. If one does go he will have to leave his traps at the best part of the season and his wife to be provided for by ~~someone~~ the others. Perhaps you do not fully realize the conditions up here. We will try to state them. The people at the camps, as well as the village have been very short of food. For one thing they have always been able to dig a few sacks of coal when they needed food and get it from the government. As you know that has been gone a long time now. Secondly - The reindeer men have butchered their male deer every year for skins - killing when the skin was good and the hair short, regardless of the condition of the deer for food and last summer they

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hatched nearly all of the male fawn.
The meat of course didn't last long.
The result is that now, when they are
hungry, they have no adult males to
kill and there will be very few to butcher
next summer. The few that have
bucks or sled deer have wanted to kill
them. There are barely enough bucks
now, such as they are, and no prospects
of more for some time. There are very
few sled deer and three fourths of them
I would rather walk than try to
ride behind. The outlook for more sled
deer, unless they are to be females, is
not very good! 3rd - The ice conditions
have been bad so that there have been
very few seal killed and the people
have been living literally from
hand to mouth on fish caught thru
the ice. 4th - There have not been
many foxes caught and they only got

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a low price for them until recently - which, while it was more than they got last year, did not go far towards supporting them. I started out to show why it is hard for our boys to take the time now to go to the Fair. The two boys I am sending are the only two that were willing to go - one because his apprentice supports his family, the other because he is his father's apprentice and has his family supported. I tried to impress on the boys that the government was doing a fine thing for them, ^{in holding a Fair} and letting them attend it but they seemed to take it as they do everything else that is done for them - that it is their due and they owe no one any thanks for it.

We don't want you to think that we are complaining. We simply want you to know what we are up against. We have been getting along fine with

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everything—but the reindeer business is certainly discouraging; I came up here with the hope of doing something in that line but have been able to get no results. It will take several years of constant care and I think a different system from the one now in use to make a respectable head out of these three. There should be some punishment given that would be remembered for broken rules and neglected heads and some way of eliminating those heads and apprentices who are lazy, incompetent and more bother than they are worth.

I am not sending Segevan and Frank with the idea of their competing for anything but with the hope that they will gain a lot of helpful knowledge and come back with some enthusiasm for the reindeer business—both

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of which are badly needed. Our three days notice naturally gave us no time for preparation or for me to make a trip to the Ice Cape head. Mack Ridge is the best boy to go from there however, I have written them to that effect and hope he can go.

11th — Our boys are starting in the morning for the Ice Cape head where they will wait for the Barrow boys. We are giving them things from the reserve supply and exchanging with them for things from our own groceries that are more suited to their trip. If I have to give the Barrow boys some I will write you by them. I am afraid that they will have a hard trip as there are no deer at Ice Cape to exchange with and the ones that they are starting with are not in the condition I would like to see them.

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We are sorry to see the boys start without a banner but there was no material belonging to the government from which one could be made and no one in the village or at the herd was willing to donate anything. - I wish I was going with them. I think it would do me as much good as theirs as, having never even seen other methods or herds, perhaps I expect too much of the men here.

Wishing that I could be with you and hoping that you will have the finest kind of a time I remain:-

Sincerely yours,
Earle M. Forrest