

SHRIVER SEES TRAGIC POVERTY

Says Native Poverty As Appalling As Any in the World

By SHEILA TURNER

"The poverty in Alaska is as deep, tragic and appealing as any in the world," Sargent Shriver told a group of new VISTAs at the University of Alaska Wednesday.

"I have never seen any lack of material resources greater than in Alaska."

Shriver, the director of the United States office of Economic Opportunity, spent three days this week inspecting village conditions.

He visited Bethel, Unalakleet, Mekoryuk, Galena, Nick O'Nick's Fishing Village, Alakanuk and King Island Village outside of Nome.

Shriver says four days is not enough time to come up with any grand plans, but he is thinking of sending a special task force to Alaska to take another look at OEO programs here.

At this point he envisions greatly expanded, reorganized services.

A similar new look at the state of Mississippi resulted

in expanded programs there.

"In order to solve problems you have to get down to its roots," Shriver told the VISTAS. "That's going to upset some people."

"Any change upsets someone. You have to be bright enough and tough enough to carry through."

Shriver pointed out that many of the poor do not have equal opportunities, particularly in the areas of justice, health and education. "We're trying to close that inequality gap," Shriver said. "There's no longer any need for anyone to be poor in 20th Century America."

He cited the new legal services started in many states including Alaska to help poor people get fair trials and to prevent them from being swindled.

He disclosed a new neighborhood health center program that will enable the

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poor to hire and fire the doctors and set the hours. Dr. Joe English, a member of his staff, said he would examine ways that such special health services might be applied to Alaska.

Headstart and Upward Bound programs are helping to equalize education Shriver pointed out. Among low achieving students participating in Upward Bound, 78% have been going on to college. Only 8% of these students went on to college, previously.

"VISTA is one of the most essential aspects of the whole picture," Shriver said. "You are the shock troops in this war against poverty. You scout out the situation to see what can be done."

Shriver found King Island Village at Nome to be one of the "most physically dilapidated places" he ever had seen in his life. He visited a VISTA's house, no better than any of the others. "The mere fact that he lived there may be one of the most significant things that happened," Shriver said. That man showed that people are still interested in those King Islanders.

Shriver and his seven year old son Timothy, participated in July 4th foot races at Nome. Timothy won second prize in the 20 yard dash for five to seven year olds. Shriver took third in the 50 yard dash for married men over 35. Pat Kennedy, deputy director of VISTA for the United States, came in second. "But he cheated," Shriver said. "I found out Pat is only 34."

Shriver also enjoyed the King Island dancers. "They can dance so much better than we can. I'd like my child to be taught Eskimo dances and songs. If Eskimos can learn to dance like that, we can learn."

Schools should hire Eskimos to teach the dancing, Shriver urged. If they were

on the faculty, their whole attitude towards school would change. They would feel that the building was theirs.

Shriver urged the new volunteers to be sensitive to the people they worked with. "A volunteer once complained to me that he could not get the people to work with him," he said. It didn't occur to the volunteers that he should be working with them, not the other way around.

Shriver compared VISTA to yeast in a loaf of bread. "You don't see it, but without it, the bread doesn't rise," he said. "Be invisible," he urged. Help people learn to lead themselves.

Bill Mullens, Shriver's special assistant, said he was going home with several suitcases full of notes. He said when all the information is sorted out, the staff would decide what their next move should be. He said they probably would consult with several experts on Alaska.

FATHER AND SON—Accompanying 7 year old Timothy Shriver on a tour of Alaska is a gentleman named Sergeant Shriver. Timothy is a fast runner who took second place in a foot race at Nome, July 4th. His dad is commanding general of the war on poverty.