

KOTZEBUE PHONES ON 'BLINK'

Councilmen ask PUC to Revoke North State Phone Co. Certificate

The city councilmen of Kotzebue have informed the Public Utilities Commission in no uncertain terms they want the North State Telephone Company put out of business in their area.

"We request permanent revocation of North State Telephone Company's certificate and ask the PUC to fully support a local telephone cooperative," they announced last week after the commission gave North State notice it must defend its license.

The news release came from Mayor Bobby Schaeffer but the Tundra Times found it impossible to call him for comment. Carl Berger, who represents the state welfare office in Kotzebue, happened to be in our office at the time and explained the problem.

"The mayor doesn't have a telephone. . . can't get one. His office is over our office and he uses our phone."

"Well, then, we'll just call your office."

"No, you can't do that," Berger explained patiently. "Our phone doesn't ring. It just blinks. You see the phone company took out the buzzer and lost it. So you can't call in unless someone happens to be at the desk to notice the blink. What we do is arrange a time to be somewhere and the office can

call out."

The Tundra Times blink to the welfare office didn't attract a runner to go for Schaeffer so our reporting is limited to the council's release.

"North State Telephone Company has been serving Kotzebue for the past six years. During the past six years, the population of Kotzebue jumped from 1,200 to 2,000 plus.

Also during the six year period, the number of telephone subscribers quadrupled. Also during this six year period, North State Telephone made NO effort in meeting the rising demand of the citizens of Kotzebue," the release reports.

"Now there are 150 subscribers and more want phones but could not get them because of North State's obsolete equipment. They have here a 100 circuit board and 150 subscribers and in many parts of the city, five to six families share ONE service line.

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"During the past six years, the citizens have been paying for service that they have not been getting. For the past six years, a lot of sorrow and anger resulted because one could not call for help. At times, death occurred — Who is actually liable? .

"Now North State files a suit charging that PUC did not give them time to improve the system. B—— S——! They had six years to improve the system in Kotzebue. For six years, local people have written letters asking for some service but only being totally neglected."

Schaeffer writes that a local telephone cooperative committee has already formed and taken the name "Tundra Telephones." It is working to get necessary funding to implement a new telephone system.

"We do not want North State Telephone Company here in Kotzebue now or ever," he added.