

For Training Oil Drilling Workers—

Rep. Tom Fink Calling for Native Training Program

A resolution calling for the development of a training program in oil drilling operations for natives has been introduced in the State House of Representatives.

According to the resolution, as presented by Rep. Tom Fink, R-Anchorage, such a program would be developed by "the State Department of Labor, the Anchorage Community College and labor unions with available training funds.

The Eskimos and Indians of rural Alaska have the ability and desire to work in the oil fields of the North Slope but lack the training to be hired, he wrote.

As an example, he mentioned a petroleum training program established in the Province of Alberta in Canada where men are trained to become drillers' assistants.

It has been found, he stated in his resolution, that the Canadian Arctic Indian and Eskimo make excellent workers because they learn drilling technology quickly and understand the winter cold on northern drilling rigs.

The training received at the

Alberta center, he continued, has provided well-paying jobs for Native people who have had to rely on laborer's wages or their indigenous abilities as hunters and fishermen.

It has also "decreased markedly oil rig accidents."

In a letter to the Tundra Times, Rep. Willie Hensley, D-Kotzebue, who is chairman of the Health, Education and Welfare House Committee, where the resolution is now being considered, noted his support for such a program.

"I am hopeful that that kind of program can be established in Alaska and be an on-going thing," he wrote.

"I feel that we have many men who would gladly take the course and would make excellent workers on the slope and along the pipeline route."

Located in Edmonton, the Alberta Petroleum Industry Training Center was opened in 1966 by the Provincial Government and trains about 1,000 men a year for the job of driller's assistant.

In late 1968, the school began to admit Indians and Eskimos from Canada's Arctic.

Applicants at the school are supposed to have a fourth grade education, but, if natural ability is apparent, the education requirement can be lowered.

Natives selected for the four-week training course are flown to the school and home again free of charge. They pay neither living costs at the school or the price of tuition and are given an allowance for their families while they are away, pocket money, and even the necessary boots, tin hat and work clothes.

The total cost for each native trainee runs about \$1,000.