

Editorial—

The Sorry State of Nome School Facilities

We would like to extend an unqualified commendation to the Nome school teachers who had the courage to set a precedent when they walked out of their classrooms on April 28 to dramatize the intolerable school facility conditions of the Nome schools.

What we are saying does not mean that we condone walkouts on any situation but the reasons behind the one-day teacher absence from the historic town's schools had sufficient basis for dramatization—the neglected school facilities. It makes us wonder why such conditions were allowed to exist for so many years.

Nome has about 2,500 population about 80 per cent of which is Eskimo. The main school facility built to accomodate 400 students, now occupying about 800, was built 40 years ago. The building is in such a state that it is considered a firetrap. Since World War II, the City of Nome acquired eight Army surplus buildings for classrooms. Built for temporary dwellings at best, these buildings are now about 25 years old and at the present time are in rundown condition.

All this spells utter deterioration of school facilities and with it, no doubt, a retrogressive effect on the learning process of the pupils, not to mention the morale factor among the teachers. It is no wonder the teachers resorted to what they did. Under the existing school facility system in Nome, they felt the conditions were becoming intolerable.

The Nome school situation needs to have a hard look by some responsible people in the U.S. government, the state as well as the responsible citizens of Nome. The upgrading of the system is an urgent need. There should be a call for new, modern school facilities that would compare favorably with the William E. Beltz Regional High School near Nome and which, we understand, Nome students cannot attend. The city's authorities will, no doubt, try their best to improve the school system but we feel they will need a lot of help.

The deterioration of the schooling system was well gauged by the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools when that organization rescinded the accreditation of the Nome High School. This is a serious warning of things to come if halfway efforts are made to upgrade Nome schools. Nome, as well as the rest of the state, has a great stake in the development of its human resources for the future and this will not be realized to its proper potential if worn and obsolete school facilities are allowed to be used any longer.