

Alaska State Library

State Capitol Bldg.

Juneau, Alaska 99801

not BIA

Barrow, Kotzebue to Have Classrooms in 1969-70

WASHINGTON, D.C.— “The red tape has been cut, and now those kids should be able to go to school in their home towns this fall.”

Those were the words of Sen.

Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, as he announced the projected opening of several relocatable classrooms in Kotzebue and Barrow for the 1969-70 school year.

About 200 youngsters will

not have to leave Alaska to go to boarding schools outside because of his action.

The classrooms are part of the regional high school program recently approved and funded

through the redistribution of \$9.6 million originally appropriated for repairs to the Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka.

When the Bureau of the Budget froze the funds because the

BIA did not wish to spend that much to upgrade the Indian school at Sitka, an alternate plan was worked out at a conference called by Sen. Gravel last Dec-
(Continued on page 6)

RECEIVED
MAY 15 1969

Classrooms in 1969 . . .

(Continued from page 1)

ember.

At the conference it was decided that the money would be better spent to construct classrooms at Kotzebue and Barrow, and student dormitories at Sitka, Fairbanks, and Bethel.

Final approval of the refunding was made by the House and Senate appropriations Committees only last week.

Senator Gravel contacted BIA officials and offered to find transportation for the structures if the agency was willing to ship them by alternate routes and to locate them in time for the school year opening in September.

It was agreed they would. In thoroughly checking the alternatives the BIA learned that the vessel "North Star" would be departing Seattle two weeks later than originally scheduled for its annual voyage to the Arctic communities.

The Bureau agreed that the extra two weeks would give them sufficient time to meet the deadline, and a procurement official would be dispatched to Seattle to expedite the entire bid procedure.

The classrooms not unlike large mobile homes joined together to form large rooms will accommodate 80 students in Kotzebue and 120 youngsters in Barrow.

Sen. Gravel, who initiated the regional high school concept when he was Speaker of the State House of Representatives in 1965-66, expressed unrestrained delight at the prospect of opening the classrooms to students this year.

"I couldn't be happier," he said, "unless of course, the entire regional high school system were to be opened this year. This will be the first tangible manifestation of a long overdue project."

Noting that many Alaskan children are currently being sent thousands of miles away to BIA schools in the south 48, the Senator said, "This enforced separation of children from their families is just not fair. It's an unjust hardship that I hope to see ended in the very near future."

"The opening of these classrooms," he concluded, "marks the beginning of the end to this glaring injustice."