

# SAFE WATER FOR VILLAGES

## Senators Ted Kennedy, And Ted Stevens Draw Up Sanitary Water Bill

What has been one of the most disturbing problems in Alaska's villages—the lack of good drinking water—may at last be resolved by legislation in Congress.

As a direct result of the recent trip by the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education headed by Sen.

Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., a measure is being prepared to solve the village water problem.

Villages for years have been plagued by polluted water they have had to use because of extreme poverty and because of this they couldn't afford to have deep wells drilled for good water.

The office of Sen. Ted Stevens R-Alaska, informed the Tundra Times this week that legislation is soon to be introduced which would provide between 125 to 150 Alaskan native villages with safe water.

Keith Kermit, of Sen. Stevens' office, said that Sen. Kennedy and Sen. Stevens have been working together drawing up a bill to be jointly introduced by them.

The Central Safe Water Facil-

ity bill will probably be introduced this week.

The federally-constructed water supply facilities, Kermit said, is a "stop-gap, interim sanitation measure."

The project, he indicated, would be of an emergency nature designed to meet the urgent need for sanitary water among Alaska's native villages. Kermit estimated that the system would benefit approximately 30,000 persons.

Although official figures on the cost of funding such a project have not been released, the cost may involve \$5 million each year over a four-year period.

Kermit described the pending legislation as a "direct result" of the tour of the native villages by Sen. Kennedy's Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education.

The subcommittee tour, held in early April, encompassed ten Alaskan native villages in three days. Kennedy, who chaired the committee hearings in villages and Fairbanks was accompanied by Sen. Ted Stevens and Congressman Howard Pollock.

Throughout the trip, the congressional legislators expressed shock as they saw conditions among impoverished native fam-

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ilies in the villages. It was not uncommon to visit large families in which there were signs of sickness due to polluted water water supplies.

In Bethel's Louse Town, Sen. Kennedy saw families obtaining water from the Kuskokwim River in front of the town.

Noting this, Kennedy asked, "Why can't wells be drilled to provide water for these people?"

He learned that drilling for water, through the permafrost which is found in the Arctic and subarctic areas of Alaska, can cost up to \$7,000 for a well. This cost is prohibitive among the impoverished native people.

Keith Kermit told the Tundra Times that the Kennedy-Stevens safe water bill might be introduced this week. He thought that this might be done on Thursday (yesterday) or Friday, today.