

Broadcasters ask aid for bush stations

From Our Juneau Bureau

Representatives of twelve public broadcasting stations throughout the Alaska public broadcasting system (APBC) were in Juneau last week to educate legislators as to specifically what their functions are in the rural areas of the State.

APBC executive director Mike Porcaro says that the total budget request for FY-78 is \$2.8 million which has been slashed by the Governor to \$1.8 million. The purpose of the trip to Juneau, said one broadcaster,

is to "lobby for our budgets."

According to Porcaro the Bush Stations are among the most important in areas where there are poor or no communications systems. Porcaro said that emphasis should be placed in those areas where the stations provide the immediate method of communication and entertainment. Porcaro says that if the state will bring the status of the rural stations up to par with federal standards for grants, supplemental funds could be received

from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and others. The corporation requires that there shall be at least five full-time employees on staff and that the stations remain on the air for eighteen hours per day. With the high cost of electrification in the bush and the high cost of living, without an increased budget, most stations cannot meet these standards.

According to the APBC budget, only one new start will be made this year at Unalakleet in the Bering Straits region. Opposition to the start has been displayed by only a few region residents explaining that there already are two stations existing in Nome, both of religious nature.

The public broadcasting stations in the bush are often a matter of life and death throughout the entire year. Supplanting the RCA system of one long distance line per village, which often is not working, the stations relay messages one-way that have a direct effect on the everyday lives of rural people.

On any day in the listening regions one may hear messages to relatives of a snowmachine or boat trip between villages. If the

traveller does not arrive at his destination within the normal travelling time search parties are dispatched to look for him.