

Capital Move

The action taken by the Rural Alaska Community Action Program Board of Directors meeting in Juneau last week in opposition to the proposed capital move makes a great deal of sense to us. Each time the idea has surfaced since statehood, this newspaper has been critical of a capital move.

Each time, our reasons are much the same:

—The state has too many people needs which are not being met and which should not have to compete for funds with extravagant proposals such as capital relocations. A glance at this week's front page will demonstrate that Fairbanks, Juneau and Bering Straits school districts are so strapped for funds that school lunch programs have been eliminated. Alaskan children should have the opportunity to eat a decent meal during the school day.

—Alaska's communications and transportation systems are more improved each time the capital move issue comes up. Why should we spend a billion dollars or more to move the capital when we can turn on a television set each evening and observe the legislative session through the addition of satellite technology to the Alaska communications system. With vastly improved jet service throughout Alaska, the capital is more accessible to Alaskans than ever. If it were in Willow, the traffic jams between Anchorage and the new capital would probably make it more difficult—not less—to get to the site. Let us invest instead in better, even more improved communications throughout all Alaska.

—Speculators are pulling the wool over voters' eyes. Speculation over land near the proposed new site is intense, with the speculators screaming the loudest about moving the capital. Matanuska and Susitna Valley farmers have been hard hit because of real estate speculation. Let us draw the line at a new capital.

—Benefits of a move would be inequitably distributed. Who would benefit from the capital move? The Sunday driver in Anchorage who would probably alternate between drives to the zoo and the capital? The land speculator? Certainly, not the average Alaskan who is concerned about the quality of education, installation of decent water and sewage systems throughout Alaska, provision of vital community services, increased police protection, adequate air facilities, and the overwhelming public needs competing for attention and funds with the capital move game.

The priorities of all Alaskans need to be reassessed. Polls indicate even Anchorage folks are reconsidering support given the move proposal during the most recent vote on the idea. There remain too many unmet needs in every region of our state to continue to seriously entertain the thought of such luxuries as a capital move.

—T.R.j.