

# 250 Eskimo Children Have Hearing Defects

Two hundred and fifty school age children in the Kotzebue, Nome and Unalakleet areas were defined as sustaining significant hearing losses which may require surgical repair of the ears as well as medical maintenance.

This was learned in a joint hearing testing program by the U.S. Public Health Service and the Alaska Department of Health and Welfare.

A plan has been established for medical or surgical repair of these children. It is planned as a first priority to treat those children with problems in both ears.

It is anticipated that this latter group (approximately 90 children) will be repaired by the end of the 1969-1970 school year.

This will enable them to complete their schooling without a handicapping hearing loss or significant medical problem of the ear that could not be controlled.

Those children who have a hearing loss that cannot be completely alleviated by medicine or surgery will be fitted with a hearing aid and trained to use it.

Bering and Chukchi Sea coast areas were tested from Stebbins to Point Hope, and included the larger communities of Unalakleet, Nome and Kotzebue.

Thirty villages with school enrollments totaling approximately 2,400 children in state-operated, BIA and private schools were evaluated by the two audiolo-

gists and one otologist. The testing team traveled to the more remote areas by Skidoo and light aircraft.

Alaska has the highest incidence of hearing loss in the United States, but the Alaska Department of Health and Welfare and the Public Health Service continue to work on the problem to salvage the hearing of Alaskan children.