

Athabascan Takes Exception to Woman's Evaluation of Migrants

September 17, 1966

Dear Editor:

I am sending an excerpt of the San Jose Mercury which appeared on August 18, 1966. Some of us Athabascan Indians in the San Jose area find the article a little disturbing. I will explain this at the conclusion of this letter.

I think the Orientation Center in Seattle is fine for those who had very little contact with the outside world. It gives the newly arrived from the sticks a chance to see for himself what the big city is like before proceeding to his eventual destination.

Mrs. Jimmie Owens, the director of the Orientation Center in Seattle, estimates that about one of every four migrants return to their homes within a year. Speaking from experience, homesickness isn't the only problem. Some are discouraged by the kind of employment they end up with. It's true no one can accomplish much during the first year. In fact it takes time to find the right job in a decent-paying category.

We are quite disturbed by Mrs. Owens' comments when she said the Indians are taught how to use telephones, flush a toilet, snap on television set, etc. I think Mrs. Owens is way back as this present-day generation is quite modern.

A published report like that makes us look like we came from caves or something and don't know much in this modern world. In my opinion, anyone who lacks the knowledge of flushing the toilet shouldn't be in the city to begin with.

I could say more but I'd rather not divulge.

Sincerely,

Bill Stevens

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Letters to Editor