

Rural school report misrepresented

A University of Alaska report predicting rural schools may "be doomed to failure" met with a poor reception in Juneau last week at a meeting of the Alaska Board of Education.

During a board session several persons in the audience soundly criticized the report and the news coverage surrounding it. The report made headlines across the state.

"It was a dumb report," says Sen. Frank Ferguson (D-Kotzebue). "There were some derogatory remarks that should've never been included. The report was misrepresented, as well."

During a Friday meeting the education panel voted 4 to 2 in favor of allowing the Nome school district to takeover the Nome-Beltz school. Board member Jan Hohman, whose husband is superintendent of schools in Nome, abstained from voting.

In a meeting with the House and Senate Health, Education and Social Services committee, board members outlined 1980 priorities. Maintaining founda-

tion support for school districts heads the list, followed by complete funding for pupil transportation costs (which was underfunded this year).

While the board wants full foundation funding to continue, the body did advocate equalization of the formula used to disburse Rural Education Attendance Area (REAA) monies. Some urban officials have complained that property tax payers carry an unfair burden in supporting local schools, while REAA's receive additional state monies due to lack of a tax base. (See "Rural School Construction" article, January 14).

A measure making it easier for rural communities to apply for revenue sharing monies was considered by the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee. The measure ties distribution of funds to population, but guarantees each village and town at least \$25,000 per year. Additional testimony on the proposal will be taken this week.

A variety of bills was introduced in the House this week by bush caucus members. Majority leader, Nels Anderson (D-Dillingham) offered a resolution requesting the federal grand jury to hear charges and complaints against Interior officials..

Anderson's resolution charges that the Secretary and "his agents have threatened to place in jail honest miners, hunters, trappers and others who live in the areas of the recently established monuments for continuing to pursue their livelihoods."

Anderson and Rep. Leo Schaeffer (D-Kobuk) co-sponsored a request for issuance of \$16 million in general obligation bonds to pay for airport lighting in 107 villages. And, Schaeffer offered a bill seeking \$25 million in bonds for airport improvements. He entered another bill by request of a constituent that would increase the number of superior court judges. >

Rep. Al Osterback (D-Sand Point) submitted several mea-

sures, including one that limits the size of scallop dredge rings. Another piece requests the department of Commerce and Economic Development to enforce laws that require corporations to declare their affiliations with foreign businesses.

Osterback is also seeking \$300,000 for an addition to the high school in his home town and \$100,000 for a feasibility study on construction of schools at Karluk and Akhiok.

Another measure requests more than \$5 million for construction projects in Akutan, Atka, Chignik, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Lake, False Pass, Old Harbor, Perryville, Sand Point and Unalaska.

Rep. Fred Zharoff (D-Kodiak) is seeking \$405,000 to fund design of a bridge from Kodiak Island to Near Island and a road from the Near Island bridge to Dog Bay Harbor.

Introduction of bills in the Senate has slowed considerably following Senate President Clem Tillion's (R-Halibut Cove) order (See RURAL, Page Eight)

● *Rural school*

(Continued from Page One)

to have measures offered by the thirtieth day of the session.

The Senate approved a "Christmas tree" bill last week that

held many presents for bush communities. The bill started out as a minor appropriation and would up totalling \$1.7 million after several requests were piggybacked onto the measure as it passed through the committee process.

The bill carries \$150 thousand to fund Civil Aeronautic Board hearings in nine rural villages. The federal board plans to hold just three hearings in the state concerning which outfits will serve specific routes. If the bill is okayed by the House then hearings will be held in April in Emmonak, St. Marys, Toksook Bay, Aniak, Bethel, Dillingham, Iliamna, Quinhagak, and King Salmon.

The "Christmas tree" includes nearly \$198 thousand to provide television transmission to 18 small towns.