

# Crash Building Gives Schooling

Thirty-five children in two river villages in western Alaska are completing their first months of schooling—training that for many of them is the first formal education they've ever received—all a result of a crash building program instituted and totally funded by the state some months ago.

The program involves 19 children at Russian Mission, on the Kuskokwim River, and another 16 youths at Pitkas Point, on the lower Yukon River.

Students in both villages now are studying in school buildings entirely built by local labor, using local materials where possible, and entirely with state funds. Neither school existed a year ago.

The lack of school facilities in the two communities was brought to the attention of Gov. Walter J. Hickel last summer. At the time, Russian Mission youngsters had to travel to Aniak, 10 miles away, for classes, which meant in most cases that youngsters had to move to the other village for the entire school term.

The same situation existed for pupils from Pitkas Point; they were required to attend class 15 miles away at St. Mary's.

In both villages many children were unable to go to school because their parents were unable to make the move to the other community.

Hickel directed the rural development agency in the Governor's Office, the Department of Education, and the Division of Buildings in the Department of Public Works to take steps necessary to build schools, and have supplies and teachers in the two villages ready for business before this past fall term began.

The governor's timetable and directive were met.

At Russian Mission, 11 local men went to work, using timber from a sawmill operated by Gary Nelson at Aniak. Nelson doubled as construction foreman.

Working under Nelson's leadership, the crew finished their work, and the school opened for business on Oct. 1. Construction had started on July 3.

Timber for the Pitkas Point school was purchased in Fairbanks, and work got under way on Aug. 14.

The doors opened on Oct. 9. A crew of 24 men built the structure under the supervision of Don Shepherd, from the State Department of Labor.

Funding for both schools came totally from the state, with \$11,066 from the Department of Education, matched with a \$6,000 Rural Development Agency grant, covering costs at Russian Mission.

Costs at Pitkas Point were met with a \$13,772 expenditure from the Education Department, and an \$8,320 RDA grant. Total cost for both schools was \$39,158.

The Department of Education provided supplies, and hired teachers for both schools.

Edison Hooley, with eight

years rural teaching experience, was assigned to Russian Mission.

Miss Geraldine Hurley, with three years experience, went to Pitkas Point.

Hickel commented, "We congratulate the people of Russian Mission and Pitkas Point for lending their important support and enthusiasm to these projects.

"It is now apparent that the state has come up with a plan wherein we can provide much needed educational facilities in our rural areas—in many cases through utilizing our own resources and abilities.

"There is no reason for these things to take years to accomplish."