

Bethel Model Cities Application Not Approved, Senators Protest

The application of Bethel for the model cities program was not approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

And Senators Bob Bartlett and Ernest Gruening have written a letter to Department Secretary Robert C. Weaver expressing "deep disappointment and dismay" at the decision.

Last week, the Department announced a list of 65 projects in 63 cities which would take place in the model cities program. They are in 33 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The program will combine all known means—federal, state, local and private—to provide social, physical and economic improvements in specified neighborhoods.

The cities will share \$11 million in planning funds and \$300 million in supplemental grants and extra urban renewal funds. A second set of cities will be chosen at a later date.

In their letter, the senators stated: "it was the intent of Congress when the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 was passed that cities, suffering the dreadful ills of poverty, joblessness, squalor and disease, were to be helped in their efforts to

improve basic living conditions.

"We do not believe that there was another applicant city which could match the need for assistance we find in Bethel."

The senators pointed out that Bethel has nearly 100 percent incidence of tuberculosis, an in-migration which boosted elementary school enrollment 37½ percent in one year, and unemployment of a majority of its residents.

"While it is true that Alaska's only congressman voted to reduce funds for the Model Cities program and to cut the authorization for funds to support the War on

Poverty, we do not believe that the people of the Bethel area should be made to suffer for this," said Bartlett and Gruening.

"On the contrary, the Bethel area so well demonstrates the need for these programs that the residents of the community should be given every means the federal government offers to encourage their strong desire to improve their lives.

"We must insist, even demand, that Bethel's application be approved... The federal government cannot through omission forsake its promises to Alaska's needy people."