

Bethel Tenants in Housing Project, ASHA Disagree

Alaska State Housing Authority and the Bethel citizens continue to squabble over some basic designs of the housing project for the poor of the Kuskokwim city.

This time the bone of contention is the way the bathrooms were designed and some of the 13 families who have moved in claimed they were not at all well designed.

Miss Emma Widmark was visiting Bethel early last month and attended a meeting between ASHA representatives and the local Bethel housing tenants and some Bethel city officials. Miss Widmark said she didn't like the attitude of the ASHA people toward the tenants.

"The problems were not impossible to solve," Miss Widmark said. "The attitude of the ASHA representatives can be described as nothing but smart-alecky toward the native people's questions at the meeting. The people were trying to have some corrections made they thought were

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Tenant, ASHA Squabble . . .

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wrong."

The main subject of the meeting was the bathroom. The tenants claimed it was small. The door opening into it all but blocked anyone who wished to get into the tub because the door bumped right against the tub and to get into it between the door and a sink was hard to maneuver.

The bathroom, Miss Widmark said, was about four feet wide and the bathtub just fits into it. The suggested remedy for this by the tenants was to turn the tub around.

Another bone of contention was the honey bucket. In the housing design, the honey bucket room is walled in by itself. The tenants said there was no way to heat it and it gets very cold in winter.

The honey bucket is adjacent to the bathtub room with a wall between them. ASHA people suggested that the wall be taken down to the bathtub level so when the door is open, the heat would get into it.

The project houses are heated by an oil stove located in the center of the house.

Miss Emma Widmark continued:

"It's a meaningful project and the people are serious about maintaining their homes properly. Their questions were not be-

ing answered in a satisfactory manner.

"The people are paying rent. They are not allowed to make alterations of the homes without the permission of the ASHA people.

"I wonder if the same attitude will persist when ASHA builds homes in places like Quinhagak, Chevak, Emmonak and other places.

"It's an example of a problem that can be solved. It's not impossible.

"I think the tenants are really trying to understand ASHA people and their project. I think that respect from both sides should be shown so the doors of communication will be kept open and more understanding from both sides developed.

"ASHA people need to know that the people are observing them."