

# Rural projects get funding

State bucks for the bush are not as plentiful as they were in the 1978 Legislature, but rural and Native concerns were not completely set aside by lawmakers this year.

Members of the bush caucus received many of the projects they sought; foundation funds for education will increase in 1980 (although the spending level for schools in 1981 was left unanswered by this legislature); and additional rural communities will be linked up with the state's satellite television demonstration project after June.

Public works projects for bush towns and villages will be substantially lower than last year's appropriation of \$110 million for rural school construction. But each bush lawmaker requested and received at least \$750,000 in capital funds for specific projects.

"I thought that it was a positive experience," said freshman Jack Fuller (D-Nome). "Unless you've followed the politics you don't know what to expect. Things were intense with the problems of getting organized and meeting deadlines. Otherwise we could've had more time to pass out better bills."

Fuller heads the House Special Committee on Subsistence which will be working during the interim on a variety of issues, from management of walrus ivory to attempting to upgrade the subsistence section of Alaska Department of Fish and Game to full division status.

Another freshman bush legislator gave high marks to his political experience. "I really enjoyed it," said Rep. Fred Zharoff (D-Kodiak). "The biggest surprise was how enthusiasm is generated over a bill. Everyone

works hard on it, you can't sleep at night, it's moving right along, and then it just disappears. Like the bill to regionalize fish and game."

Gov. Jay Hammond's request for capital projects for school districts was increased by more than 400 percent during work by the Free Conference Committee on the budget.

This committee is composed of three House and three Senate members to iron out differences in the two versions of the state's budget. Senators John Sackett (R-Galena) and George Johman (D-Bethel) were on that committee.

About \$3 million was included for Health and Life Safety Code improvements for many bush schools which are becoming run down or need additional space. Also tacked on to those appropriations was \$1.3 million to cover shortfalls in rural school construction funds for the Lower Yukon Rural Education Attendance Area.

Community colleges in Bethel, Kotzebue and Nome received nearly all of the funding requested for them by Hammond. In fact, the recently established Kotzebue Community College received 26 percent more money than Hammond sought. And funding for academic support for the rural education program was set at \$268,000 — nearly 47 percent higher than Hammond's initial figure.

(See BUDGET page ten)

# ● Budget provides for rural projects

(Continued from page three)

Those three rural colleges will also receive new li-

brary books.

Other budget highlights include a Kipnuk Village

health center, a prematernal and halfway house in Bethel and an addition to the health center in Galena.

Although Native corporations didn't make out as well this year as they have in the past, several grants were awarded to those or-

ganizations. Funds will go to the Kuskokwim Native Corp., the Koyukon Development Corporation, the Alaska Native Foundation and the Mauneluk Assn., for example.

A bill passed in the closing days of the 1979 legislature concerning the state's loan programs carried a new provision that will spur loans for housing in rural communities.

Recently the Alaska Housing Finance Authority

came under fire from Sen. Sackett for dragging its feet on implementing the rural housing program. Perry Eaton, head of the authority, said a plan presented last fall to the board of directors did not adequately answer the problems of insurance and title protection.

The loan bill establishes funds to cover rural housing hazard insurance and a rural housing title insurance.

