

FUEL CRISIS HITS ALASKAN VILLAGES

Shortage Will Have A Severe Impact

Fighting for their life line of communications, a way to earn their living, and in many cases where medical help is needed, their very lives, the people in outlying areas of the State are faced with more than the average inconvenience as the fuel shortage looms.

Jim Huntington, Director of Rural CAP's Koyukon Development Corporation, has written the following letter as a plea for the 19 villages his agency serves. This office is located in Galena, on the Yukon River.

The Energy Crisis will put a serious affect on the bush villages of Alaska. A cut in gasoline could and will cause a lot of hardships for the people living in the bush villages.

Some say go back to the dog team. No one stops to think it takes at the best three to four years to raise a dog team that will enable the people to trap and haul wood. It takes two months of fishing with a fish-wheel to feed them, plus, you have to have gasoline to fish or without the gas there is no fish. It takes gasoline to trap with a snowmachine, otherwise, with no gas there will be no fur and no meat.

We have to have the gas to get the fish for the dogs so that the dogs can haul the wood to

keep our houses warm.

If we use a snowmachine we will have to have gas to haul the wood, no matter what way you do look at the poor people of the bush. They will need the gasoline to keep the light going or either live in the dark as they did a thousand years ago.

Another important matter to consider is the depletion of the salmon in the rivers of Alaska. The fish isn't there to feed the dogs like it use to be. The foreign countries have a monopoly on the fish that use to be the feed for our dogs. If there is no dogs to do the work of the snowmachines, then, it will mean we have to have gasoline for our snowmachines and outboard motors, or go back to living like our ancestors had lived hundreds of years ago.

The air taxi operators also need gasoline for their bush planes since there is hardly a day that goes by that a life depends on the operators of air taxis in Alaska. Even the larger airlines are cutting back. What is going to happen to the mail that is bringing in 80% of the staple food for the bush villages? There isn't enough barge lines to bring in food for the villages along the rivers of Alaska, so we do depend heavily on the airlines for the delivery of our staple food. The airlines deliver at least 50% of the needs of the bush villages of Alaska.

If we can have the same amount of gasoline we have had in the bush villages this year, then, we can manage it with the understanding that any newcomers will have to make their own arrangements as to their need of gasoline. We of the bush villages cannot make a living if we do not have gasoline.

They will have to take a good look at Alaska as it is and how it is going to be when the Pipeline impact hits Alaska before they start any cutbacks on the gasoline in Alaska. Some people can take a cut in stove oil but no one, especially in the bush, can get along without gasoline.

Fuel prices in the rural areas have risen a great deal in some cases; for example, in the Bristol Bay area, a 50 gallon barrel of fuel oil now costs \$20 that used to be \$17. In Copper Center, a 50 gallon drum used to cost \$12, now costs \$14.95; in Juneau, fuel has risen from 36 to 44 cents per gallon. In Fort Yukon, 50 gallons of fuel oil used to be \$21.30, and now costs \$29; while in Bethel, a gallon of fuel has hiked from 28.5 to 33.3 cents per gallon. Kotzebue has has an 18 per cent raise in prices since October. In Galena, gas is up 22 per cent, at 68 cents per gallon, and heating fuel is up 14 per cent at 42 cents per gallon.