

*Funds Vital While Available—*

# OEO Disaster Fund Aid So. Naknek

"The people of South Naknek relied heavily on this disaster fund this winter. The wages derived from these self-help projects provided funds to purchase fuel, foods and other items to survive the winter."

A handwritten note on lined tablet paper from a Village Council member tells how they used money from the Office of Economic Opportunity which was granted to the stricken Bristol Bay area last year to help relieve the economic stress imposed by the disastrous drop in the red salmon harvest in 1974.

Coordinator for the program, Arnold Nielsen, commented that results derived from the \$420,000 grant would have fallen far short of what was accomplished if it had not been dovetailed with the one million dollar grant from the State.

Nielsen explained that the OEO fund was almost entirely for labor, while the more flexible State fund purchased materials and equipment.

"These villages did not have access to equipment, materials, or fuel," he stated. "Everything had to start from scratch."

Other letters from Bay Area residents stated that, "The people of Levelock used this OEO disaster fund to install water lines to the health clinic, hooked up the electric lines and remodeled power house and fuel house.

"We also worked on the community equipment garage and created a community building. Without this money, many people would of suffered by not having funds to purchase their fuel, groceries, and other necessary items. It prevented many people from going on welfare. . .

"From Pedro Bay: "The money was used by the villagers to improve the village roads, build bridges, getting wood for the community hall, and doing many other jobs which had to be done for the community.

"The grant was such a big help to every person here thru this past winter. Usually fuel bills are never paid off by spring or people never have enough fuel to last the winter. This year has been the easiest and best as far as every person here is concerned. . . ."

Iliamna sent a similar letter saying that it helped people through the hardest part of the year, to buy fuel oil, gas, and groceries. They constructed a badly needed community hall, and also a boat dock.

"We would have had a lot of people on welfare, this has helped the people to keep busy and work every day."

Nondalton funds were used to build a co-op store, a Head Start worked on extending the airport, and " . . . also bought food and fuel whenever there is a hard time for some of the families."

One of the villages listed projects accomplished: Built a post office, repaired and painted a building for the central power plant, painted the community center, set up the city light plant, and worked on the breakwater for the houses on the river front.

What with tearing down an old outhouse and cleaning away all heavy junk, the report said, "This grant has been a great help in bringing employment to our village (Port Heiden) and it has made it possible for us to have a cleaner village."

Kokhanok Village Council reported that they used the grant "on improving the village resident homes and also for general clean up. The money helped the people to purchase their winter supply of fuel and food as far as it went."

They also commented, "This type of project was really appreciated by the people and they would like to see some more of these programs again for next year."

In his final report on the project, Nielson remarked that, "These people show a lot of pride in their work projects and also being able to support themselves instead of relying on welfare. I think this is a form of self-reliance."