

Editorial—

Agonizing Inaction of Government Agencies

As it seems to happen sometimes, there is a period of befuddled silence, and inaction, among governmental agencies, both state and federal, when disaster strikes native communities in Alaska. Such an agonizing inaction is now going on while many of the people of the flood ravaged village of Galena are miserably waiting for something to happen in a way of assistance promised them by different agencies, including the Red Cross, very soon after the devastating flood hit the community on May 22. And here it is—July 7—47 days since the flood and the people of Galena still don't know what is coming in the way of help so they can have some measure of comfort when winter comes that is not really too far away from now.

Some of the villagers who lost their homes when the flood-driven ice floes knocked down the houses and carried them away are still living in canvas tents and some are living in miserable makeshift hovels.

There seems to be no doubt, and as usual, the agencies are flipping back and forth among themselves ideas of what to do with Galena apparently with little consultation with its people. This is evident, as John Sackett mentioned in his column on this page today, that an Alaska State Housing Authority official suggested that Galena people move 11 miles to higher ground near the dump area of the Campion Air Force Base. This literally odorous suggestion was vetoed by the villagers at their recent meeting.

It is also evident, judging from the results of meetings with agency representatives, that nothing has been accomplished although the representatives "piously" expressed wishes to help but nothing has happened to date. This could mean that the agencies have not come to an agreement to spring on the Galena folks.

Whatever that might be, we hope that it will be conducive to the Athabascan Indian lifestyle along the Yukon River, in which case Galena folks might concur. If not, the agencies will not get anywhere. They might as well get down to business fully involving Galena villagers because they are the ones who will be living at the site agreed upon.