

# Village Is Frustrated Without Postoffice

The village of Chalkyitsik has been without a postoffice for about a year because of the misconduct of a former rural postal clerk.

"People of Chalkyitsik feel the treatment is unfair because they are not trusted by other people because of one person's misconduct," said Steve Greenwald, VISTA volunteer in that village.

Late last summer, a postal inspector came to the village and closed the postoffice. The man was "uncooperative" and he didn't consult the right people. First and second chiefs of Chalkyitsik were away at the time and the inspector talked with two people who had no authority to talk for the village. He also stayed a very short time.

Since then, Chalkyitsik people have been getting their mail through the Ft. Yukon postoffice 65 air miles away.

"Ft. Yukon postoffice now handles the mail for Chalkyitsik," Greenwald continued. "When a person gets a C.O.D. package, the postmaster at Ft. Yukon sends a card notifying the recipient and the person in turn sends the right amount of money. After this process, the package finally comes two weeks later."

This process is also followed in getting stamps. The village people send money to Ft. Yukon for them and the delay sometimes causes a shortage of stamps. This has resulted in a purported black market in stamps where a five-cent stamp will sell for ten cents.

Bessie Edwin is now acting as a rural postal clerk handling the village mail but she is doing it without pay and this since last October. She, along with other people, had put in a bid for the postal clerk position and she had been accepted and approved by the postal Department.

However, Bessie Edwin has to have a \$2,000 bond before she can officially take over the job and get paid for it. She and the community applied for the bond from two Fairbanks insurance agencies but she was turned down flat.

She made another application in Anchorage and the insurance company there said it would give it to her if she had a co-signer. She has not been able to get a co-signer to date.

"Bessie is a very well respected person in the village, a hard worker and the village is sure she would be very reliable," said Greenwald. "She sticks up for her rights and she does it very energetically."

As a last resort, the village

is thinking and hoping that an organization such as the Association on American Indian Affairs in New York, might be able to serve as a co-signer so Chalkyitsik can have a postoffice and have normal services for postal money orders and C.O.D.'s and other services.

"I don't think the people back there would have to worry too much. Bessie is highly respected and she has a strong character," said Greenwald.

In the meantime, the people of Chalkyitsik are frustrated without a postoffice and and slighted.

"It doesn't mean that we are all bad because one man did not do the right thing," they said.