

Typical Ignorance--

Mag: Native Kids Don't Need Milk

FAIRBANKS—Several weeks ago, the University of Alaska and several Alaska businesses cooperated with a Bethel school teacher to send a registered dairy cow to the village.

Residents of Bethel gave the animal an enthusiastic reception. The adults were interested to see a live representative of the animal which supplies them with cow hide for parka trim and mukluks, and the children singed up to take turns feeling the animal and tasting its warm milk.

A recent issue of Sports Illustrated magazine, however, criticized the project. An item in the Chicago-based magazine says that "most Alaskan Indians and Eskimos have had little or no experience with cow's milk and would seem to need none."

Today, however, there is no Alaskan village so remote that fresh groceries cannot be flown in on a regular basis.

"Fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, milk and every other food product has been available in every Alaskan village for more

than twenty years," said Carroll Linday, a Fairbanks grocer.

Bethel has only 2,000 residents but it is a supply center for the entire Kuskokwim river area. Many native children there eat more white man's processed foods than the wild game and salmon that has been their staple diet in the past. The problem is they tend to eat sugars and starches lacking in important nutrients.

"Alaskan villagers have the same deficiencies in vitamins A, C, and calcium that are a problem throughout the U.S." said Jean K. Burand, coordinator of the university's nutrition program. "And in Bethel there is a particular lack of calcium because the traditional staple is fish, which is low in calcium."

The characteristically poor diet of many Alaskan villagers causes poor teeth and bow legs and contributes to problems of mental depression and alcoholism. Bringing a cow to Bethel was seen as a way to interest the people, particularly the children in using more milk.

"At least now they know that milk doesn't start out in a tin can or a cardboard box," said Arthur L. Brundage, professor of animal science at the university's Institute of Agricultural Sciences. "Perhaps we should fly a dairy cow to Chicago from Alaska so the children there can be equally informed."