

# NATIVE EMPLOYMENT DROPS

## Despite Much Rhetoric Unemployment Grows

By MADELYN SHULMAN  
Staff Writer

While Alaska's State and local governments suffer increasing shortages of trained professional and para professional personnel, the unemployment of Alaska's Native peoples has risen both percentage wise and by absolute numbers.

These two seemingly unrelated statistical facts are tied together in a new study, Manpower Needs in Alaska, published last week by the Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research of the University of Alaska.

"Despite rhetoric and programs designed to increase Alaska Native hire, it is possible that unemployment among Alaska Natives has actually risen over the last few years." From March 1966 to March 1969 the study estimates as much as a 10 per cent rise in Native unemployment.

"This increase in unemployment is due not only to the swelling of the available labor force by young workers. More shocking, it also appears to be due to a decline in the total number of Alaska Natives who are employed."

Drs. Judith Kleinfeld and Thomas Morehouse outlined haphazard state hiring policies for minority groups which often frustrate applicants through bureaucratic processes. Also, inflated job qualifications weed out applicants able to do the job.

One solution to Native unemployment may be, say Morehouse and Kleinfeld, to train

(Continued on page 6)

# Native Unemployment..

(Continued from page 1)

Alaskan Natives to fill the various service jobs open in the rapidly expanding social services programs developing in Alaska.

"Alaska state and local government is presently suffering critical shortages of personnel in many service occupations, especially in rural areas of the state...By training Alaska Natives for subprofessional public service positions, especially in rural areas, Alaska government can meet its responsibility to reduce unemployment while alleviating its own manpower needs."

Training its own dentists, doctors, lawyers, social workers and administrative specialists with graduate degrees may be an unreasonably expensive means of producing such people in Alaska—and one which will take many years to develop.

Relaxing qualifications for "in-State hire," the report recommends, may be more realistic. Also, the state must start to compete—in salaries, promotions, opportunities—with federal government and private industries.

Community colleges and on-the-job training programs can, however, train less specialized subprofessionals — draftsmen, nurses, health technologists, and other occupations.

By increasing this training, Alaska can staff its service agencies with Alaskans, giving greater opportunity to Alaskan Natives while upgrading social services in rural areas.

Rural areas, traditional "hard-

ship posts" for outside health and social welfare professionals, can be serviced by people from the area.

This would end the rapid turnover rate which plagues government agencies in the bush—and provide a more intimate relationship between government and the people it serves.

To accomplish these goals, Alaska must first find means to stretch its highly trained professionals. Inter-agency posts, part-time positions, sharing of talent can stretch manpower along with more reliance on subprofessionals.

For too long, state government has let politics decide its hiring policies. Alaska has no state program for minority hire, despite advances in this area in other states with less severe problems.

Successful federal and local programs (Anchorage borough) have proved these programs work.

Eventually, state government must restructure its salaries and promotions scales to attract the top professionals—the people who won't stay in the mediocre jobs which apply political pressure for higher pay.

They don't fit "average" requirements and expect to reach the top.

A state bureaucracy which holds the most talented people down will attract the least qualified, most mediocre people—and it will lose in the long run.