

Native Hiring in Canneries Improves

JUNEAU, ALASKA—Alaska's giant fish processing and canning industries in the western part of the state are hiring more native resident Alaskans than ever before and everyone seems to be happy with the arrangement.

Commissioner of Labor Thomas J. Moore reported this week that "more Alaska natives worked in more jobs in more fish processing and canning plants in Western Alaska in 1968 than in any other year in history."

Moore attributes the sharp upsurge in native employment in the fisheries to a "latent realization among cannery owners that it makes good business sense to hire qualified local workers." He predicted the day is "fast approaching" when some 90 percent of all processing and cannery labor will be hired locally.

"During the first eight months of this year, we placed nearly 200 Eskimos in fish processing and canning jobs in one small community in Western Alaska," Moore said. "Two years ago, we had a lot of trouble placing 70 Eskimos in the same area. As you can see, we are making notable progress. I think we may have reached a breakthrough in one segment of our local hiring program."

The commissioner singled out Pan Alaska Fisheries as "one of the pioneers" in the switchover to native labor. He said Pan Alaska gave employment to 92 Eskimos this year in its process-

ing and canning plants.

He also commended Pacific Alaska Fisheries at King Cove, Columbia Ward Fisheries at Alitak and Port Bailey, the New England Fish Company at Uganik Bay, and Wakefield Fisheries at Port Lions "for the progress they are making in the use of local workers."

Moore said an average employee in a fish processing or fish canning job makes about \$800 gross a month. He said the average worker receives a three or four-month contract a year, receives two-way air transportation and usually receives food and housing at a nominal charge.

"We are working for employment stability in the fish processing and canning industries," Moore said. "For years, we were faced with a 'worker duration' problem in these industries; our workers would complete 30 or 40 days of employment, then pick up and go home. But this is changing. More and more of the workers are fulfilling their contracts and returning from year to year. Work stability is being achieved, slowly but surely."