

TANANA SCHOOL PROPOSED

Vocational Training High School \$1.5 Million Bond Issue Asked

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JUNEAU—Legislation calling for a \$1.5-million bond issue to finance a vocational training high school at Tanana on the Yukon River has been introduced into the State House of Representatives by Rep. Norb Skinner, D-Clear.

Skinner said he felt the vocational high school would not only be an important training center for students from throughout the Interior, but also predicted the school would be a vital job-training center for the nearby proposed Rampart Dam.

"Passage of HB-145 by both Houses of the legislature would mean a \$1.5-million bond issue would be placed before the voters at the 1966 general election," he said.

"The authorization of the bonds for the Rampart vocational school at Tanana would be an expression of faith to the native people of the Interior," Skinner said. An expression that the leaders of this State intend to insure that the native people will

share the prosperity of Rampart."

The legislator said he envisioned the school being designed so it could be used as a vocational high school during the normal school year and a job-training institute during shorter summer sessions.

"Even regardless of Rampart the question of vocational training for our native Alaskans has been too long ignored," he charged.

Skinner, who represents the vast 15th election district of Interior Alaska, pointed out that his district alone has experienced during the past decade almost a 50 per cent increase in population in its native villages.

"The increase came when there was also a heavy population drain to urban areas. This only indicates more clearly that our mounting problems of poverty, unemployment, and welfare will not evaporate of themselves," he said.

"There are perhaps many partial cures for poverty and its bedfellows," the legislator said. "But the only reasonably sure cure I know of is education and training in useful skills," he added.

Skinner also explained that along with the population explosion among the native peoples has come a decline in child mortality.

This means through health programs we have solved the problem of survival.

"Now we have to figure out what comes after survival," he added.

Students annually are turned away from Mt. Edgecumbe High School because of lack of room. In essence they are denied equal opportunity, because in this day and age denial of education means denial of employment.

The vocational school at Tanana would be situated at the geographic center of the Interior at the confluence of the Yukon and Tanana River. It has an excellent airfield capable of handling large planes, and it is accessible by heavy water transportation.

Tanana is also the site of a Public Health Hospital, and has suitable high ground ideal for construction of such a school. The school would be away from the disadvantages of urban areas and may in the near future be linked by road, as the highway is extended from Manley Hot Springs to the Rampart damsite area.

"Situated at Tanana the vocational programs of the school could serve the Yukon Flat area, the Yukon and Koyukuk Valleys, and portions of Northwest Alaska.

Tanana is also the historical and traditional center of Interior Alaska for the aboriginal populations. "Here the people came to trade from all over the Interior hundreds of years ago, here they traded with Russian and Englishman a century ago, here the chiefs met to discuss problems 50 years ago, and each summer the leaders of the Interior villages will gather here," the lawmaker said.

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"I therefore feel it is certainly a fitting place for our native youngsters to come to learn and train for a new Alaska," the legislator said.

The bill was referred to the House Health, Welfare, and Education Committee after introduction, and will later be considered by the House Finance Committee before coming to the floor for a vote. The bill will then go to the Senate.

Skinner said Ruby, Nulato, and Nenana were also possible sites for the school, but said Tanana was probably best because of its adjacency to the Rampart Dam site and the public health hospital there.