

## PLAN GOES AWRY

The projected Economic Development Administration's plan to install cold storages in a score or so villages has apparently gone awry due to lack of adequate electric power in those villages. These communities, therefore, are losing the opportunity that would enable them to store quantities of perishable fish and game they could use for subsistence or to process their fish products for marketing. One of the obstacles is that the Rural Electric Association is not interested in financing village power plants because it is not feasible economically.

During the past four years, approximately, the Eskimo fishermen around the Seward Peninsula have been selling their annual fish catches to buyers and they have found out that the sales were hardly worth the trouble. During that period, the fish buyers have been paying the Eskimo fishermen 35 cents each for chum salmon that weigh 7 to 10 pounds. It has been said that this same fish can be sold in Anchorage for 23 cents per pound. Under this price setup, some of the Eskimo fisherman have earned \$1,000 per year or less for selling all of their catches. As a result, they have suffered through the winter from lack of dried fish for their own use as well as for dog food for their teams. They probably would have been better off if the fishermen dried their fish catches for winter use and sold some of it for cash. Dried salmon has sold as high as \$1.00 per fish, although this price might be somewhat inflated.

The Eskimos of Northwestern and Western Alaska are becoming more and more aware that their fish and fish products are the most promising economic potential they have available. The fish they catch is of fine quality and is much sought after in fish markets. The glaring discrepancy here is that the Native fishermen are paid far below what their fish is worth. One does not have any quarrel with the buyer's need to make a reasonable profit, but one should also consider the needs of the Native fishermen to make reasonable living wages and who, at the present time, have no protection from marketing associations, fishermen's unions or co-operatives.

Due to this lack of protection, our Native northern fishermen are being exploited. This exploitation should deserve a hard look by appropriate state and federal agencies. Native associations should also take a hard look at it to explore ways of correcting the discrepancies so our fishermen can benefit from a good resource that is already available to them.