

KENNEDY SEES ABJECT POVERTY

'Why Isn't Something Done?' Asks Senator

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Often, as he walked, the Senator would turn to a guide and ask, "Why isn't something done?"

Massachusetts Senator Edward M. Kennedy asked this question in Tuluksak or Nunapitchuk, or in any one of the small villages which he had visited in exploring the problems of native education and other related areas.

The Senator, chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education, was traveling on a rigorous schedule through western and northern Alaska.

Other members of his party included Sen. S. Walter Mondale, D-Minnesota; Sen. William Saxbe, R-Ohio; Sen. Henry Belman, R-Oklahoma; and Sen. George Murphy, R-California.

Accompanying subcommittee members on the trip were Alaska Native leaders Rep. Willie Hensley and AFN President Emil

Notti. Alaskan Republicans Senator Ted Stevens and Rep. Howard Pollock also were present.

The party left Anchorage Wednesday morning with a large contingent of newsmen for Bethel where it received an enthusiastic welcome from the waiting crowd. Banners proclaimed "Welcome Senator Kennedy" while the Bethel High School Band played marches. As Kennedy greeted the throng, one girl several times screamed "He said 'hi' to me!" Elderly Eskimos

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SEN. KENNEDY AND NATIVE LEADERS—Sen. Edward Kennedy is conferring with the native leaders, Emil Notti, center, and Rep. William Hensley, aboard the Air Force C-130 plane enroute to Bethel last Wednesday. Notti is the president of the Alaska Federation of Natives. Hensley is from Kotzebue, a Democrat. Sen. Kennedy was apparently deeply enthralled by abject poverty he was around Bethel area. Kennedy party has been in Nome, Kotzebue and Barrow and the group will arrive in Fairbanks today. A hearing will be in Alaskaland tonight from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

—Photo by THOMAS RICHARDS, JR.



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came forward to display a smile, vigorously shaking the Senator's hand.

Immediately following the reception, Senator Kennedy and his party departed Bethel for outlying villages aboard Wien bush planes, which appeared small beside the Air Force C-130 that brought him from Anchorage.

The group initially planned to visit the villages of Chefnak, Tanunak and Newtok. Due to weather conditions, which were to interfere more than once during the course of the tour, the party dropped in unexpectedly to Tuluksak, Nunapitchuk, and Pilot Station.

Here, the Senator visited with many families and discussed matters such as the high food prices and health problems, as well as attitudes toward separation of native students from their families.

In many places, it was not uncommon for Sen. Kennedy to visit a home of one room which served to accommodate a family of ten. It was on these and similar occasions that deep concern became visible on his face.

The party returned to Bethel Wednesday afternoon to tour the town. The first stop on the tour was Bethel's Louse Town. Here, Kennedy met with one family of eleven persons living in a one-room cabin heated only by a small stove.

At another house, measuring 10 by 14 feet, there was a family of ten. Several members of the family has health problems and the father was only employed in occasional part-time jobs.

The Senator asked, "How do you pay for your food?" He was answered, "We must hunt and fish." When Kennedy inquired as to the family's source of water, he was told that they obtained it from the river.

On the banks of the river were piles of raw sewage which had just begun to melt under the Spring sun.

Kennedy looked at the Public Health Service guide and queried, "Why aren't wells being drilled to provide water for these people?"

The answer came quickly: "Wells are very expensive; they can cost \$7000 each."

Seeming more cheerful as he inspected homes built through the Bethel Housing Program, Sen. Kennedy chatted with housewives and signed autographs for children. The assembly area produces new frame houses at the rate of one per day. Yet, there are many who must wait.

He appeared less impressed as he observed the PHS Hospital which displayed holes on its ceilings and mold in the operating room. The 42 bed hospital rarely has an empty bed, as it serves thirteen-thousand persons

in eighty-five square miles.

Upon completion of the Bethel tour, subcommittee members again boarded the C-130 to leave for Nome. Again, the weather situation thwarted plans and the plane returned to Anchorage.

Thursday morning, the plane left Elmendorf Air Force Base enroute to Nome. There, subcommittee members and newsmen toured Nome Public School

and the King Island Village.

From Nome, the group departed to Kotzebue to again board light planes for travel to the small villages of Selawik, Noatak and Kivalina. There, the Senator received the same enthused reception that he received on the other stops.

Returning to Kotzebue, the subcommittee entourage met and

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had dinner with Kotzebue native leaders. Topics of discussion included methods of improving education for rural natives and the native land claims situation. Kennedy and his party then departed to Barrow, where they spent the night.

Although Senator Kennedy was reluctant to make any statement regarding the findings of the Subcommittee on Indian Education, he did have several initial observations.

"I am obviously perplexed by the lack of secondary education opportunities, lack of native teachers, and the lack of the development of a curriculum which is perhaps of more relevance to the experience of the native people," the Senator stated.

He also indicated that he might be favorable toward the regional high school concept.

"I am quite familiar with regional high schools," he said. "We have a number of them in my own state of Massachusetts and they work exceedingly well. I would certainly think that, in talking to the students as well as the parents, that this is the kind of program that I think could make a great deal of sense."

Alaska's Congressman Howard Pollock and Senator Stevens indicated that they were pleased with the manner in which the subcommittee is gathering information.

Congressman Pollock said, "I find that very often when we have visiting firemen who are here for just a day or two, to be

come experts they just go to Nome and Kotzebue and Barrow as our largest native villages and don't see the situation as it is in the small places. We will be going to a number of small villages," he added, and I am just delighted to see this."

Alaskan native leaders were similarly impressed.

Rep. William Hensley, of Kotzebue, said, "Many native leaders in the villages, and the natives themselves, are often depressed when they talk of the problems and nothing comes of their complaints. I think this trip gives the people a chance to talk about the problems and to feel that their problems are heard. After all, you can't go much further than Senator Kennedy, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs."

The president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, Emil Notti, also traveled with the Senator. "I have had much time to talk with the senators and discuss our position on land claims. Many of them are not acquainted with the field. I have also been able to talk with Senator Kennedy," he continued.

"... he is acquainted with the Field Committee Report, but not in detail. I am hoping that he will give a strong talk when it comes up in Congress."

Further meetings with Alaskan native leaders will be held in Barrow today. Because of the unity within the Arctic Slope Native Association and its strong policy stands, many expect this meeting to be one of the most intensive scheduled.

The party will depart Barrow Friday afternoon, stopping at Arctic Village and Ft. Yukon, arriving in Fairbanks at 4:30 p.m. this afternoon. In Fairbanks will be a meeting with native students from the University of Alaska commencing at 6:30.

Following this, at 7:00 p.m., will be a closed hearing which will be by invitation only to be held at Alaskaland.