



**Editorial—**

## **Staff Study . . .**

# **An Important Proposal**

The "Staff Study" entitled, **ALASKAN NATIVES & FEDERAL HIRE**, authored by Robert D. Arnold and Esther C. Wunnicke for Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska, is an important and far-reaching proposal. If implemented, it would have tremendous impact in the enhancement of the economy of our native people and at the same time, it would enhance the economy of the state as a whole. The native people, being largely permanent and non-fluent portion of the population of Alaska, would certainly help the money they earn to circulate within the state and which would benefit businesses as well.

The study asks the President's Review Committee for Development Planning in Alaska in Washington, D. C., that the federal government hire more native people in its vast chain of agencies in Alaska. With over 14,000 workers in its rolls, the federal government is the largest employer in the state. But at the present time, however, less than one federal employee of ten is an Alaska native. This is a low ratio considering that

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*I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend to death your right to say it? - Voltaire*

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about one-fifth of the state's population is native.

The study points out one serious handicap in job-getting among our people and that is lack of adequate education. Huge percentage of our native population within the employable ages have not reached the eighth grade level in school.

Some work training programs, however, have proven that if our less educated people were given specialized training, they became good employees if not excellent employees. The work-experience program, now in progress, is an excellent example where good percentage of the trainees have become employable. This is being proven by the Army at Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks that is participating in the work-experience training program under agreement with the state Department of Health and Welfare. The Fort has been hiring trainees from this program and the Army officials there have characterized it as "a definite asset" and a "meaningful way of integrating the Alaska Native into the productive workforce."

The staff study, in our opinion, is most imaginative and well thought out request from the federal government. Its suggestions and recommendations speak well for the needs of native Alaskan citizens. Its implementation would fill one of the urgent necessities of our people—a chance to work and earn. Properly planned training procedures for jobs would fill the gap now existing among our less educated people who have been handicapped because of it.

It is a known fact that some native folks, even with an educational level as low as second grade, have attained skills comparable to those with more education. The proposal of the staff study would give their less fortunate brothers and sisters the impetus to become useful and more productive citizens.

**THE ALASKAN NATIVES & FEDERAL HIRE** deserves favorable and positive attention because it would fill one of the greatest needs in our state.