

**After Public Outcry—**

# Nome Housing Woes Mended

After a public outcry in Nome, headlines in the TUNDRA TIMES and other newspapers, a massive effort by ASHA officials has succeeded. The Nome Turnkey III housing project will open as planned—with the tenants slated for the project by the Nome Housing committee.

By special authority from Washington, ASHA will pool the costs of operation of the Nome Project with other ASHA public housing projects in Alaska.

This will allow ASHA to draw upon surplus subsidy monies from conventional low rent housing projects in other areas of Alaska.

These projects, such as those in Kodiak, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau and Ketchikan, have tenants with higher income levels than Nome and need less subsidy.

Housing and Urban Development Assistant Secretary Norman Watson approved the budget consolidation last week, according to Kenneth Gain of the Alaska State Housing Authority.

Weeks of frantic searches for a solution to the sticky Nome housing problem prompted John Soucich of the HUD Housing Management Staff to advance the budget consolidation idea.

Although this solution will help the Nome project—and end the unpleasant possibility of being unable to house families who have already picked out their houses and obtained keys, it will not help the many other proposed Alaska housing projects with the same problem.

The Brooke Amendment, which limits rent cost to 25 per cent of a low income family's adjusted income, is designed to prevent too high rents, Gain reported.

However, Alaska is a special case. Its rural areas have abysmally low income families and housing requires extremely high maintenance costs. Thus, ASHA comes out with deficits which must be paid. If the tenants cannot, who can?

"Most people in Alaska spend well over 25 per cent of their income on housing," Gain explained, "usually up to 35 per cent of their gross income."

Thus, the 25 per cent figure, designed to protect low income families, often acts to their disadvantage. It disqualifies them from low income housing because their income is too low.

The same problem threatens the 1200 unit AFN housing project now being planned, as well as most other bush projects. The money which was used for Nome is practically exhausted. At most, Gain estimated, they can fund a few more units by using surplus subsidies.

Right now, the AFN and Alaskan legislators are pushing for special enabling legislation in Washington—to deal with Alaska's special problems. Otherwise, ASHA officials will continue to have to hunt for loop-

holes in order to serve the people they are trying to help.