

North Slope Borough Proposal-

'... Boroughs Dragged Kicking, Screaming Into Existence'

Since the founding of Alaska, the unorganized borough has included most of Alaska's

native villages and provided an obstacle to development of local self-government in these areas.

Juneau, thousands of miles away from much of the unorganized borough, has struggled to provide any type of essential services for these vast areas. During the 1960s, when many of the state's boroughs organized, native villages with their poverty and social problems were left out. To this date, most have no high school facilities, sewage, water and electricity is still in the process of being installed.

As an example, when the Juneau borough organized, according to local government consultant Robert Dupere, it was structured to exclude Southeast Indian villages. In one instance, when the acquisition of a large island with valuable timber resources was considered, it was turned down by the School Board in Juneau due to the problems of having to run a native village school.

As a rule, as Dupere testified in Barrow two weeks ago at a Local Boundary Commis-

sion hearing on the North Slope Borough Proposal "Alaska's organized boroughs were dragged kicking and screaming into existence."

Most of them, according to the State Constitution, were "mandatory." The problems of local government have filled the pages of the Anchorage press for months.

Outlying residents, afraid of paying extra taxes, continually vote against expansion of the Anchorage Borough and perpetuate duplication of services in that rapidly expanding area.

"Had we been toying with the idea of a small and troublesome borough like most boroughs are," testified Eben Hopson, Special Assistant to Governor Egan, at hearings before the Local Boundary Commission, "we would not have included the whole north slope. Let me also remind the Commission that this administration is very sensitive to the problems of the "Bush" and has been very responsive in this respect."

In an interview with Speaker

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of the Alaska House Gene Guess (D-Anchorage) last week in the ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS, Guess told news reporter Allan Frank that the North Slope borough proposal may be a catalyst for a major rewriting of local government laws in the 1972 legislative session.

"There will be some proposal on government in the unorganized borough and a Department of Community Affairs," he said.

"The administration is considering some sort of measure—this wouldn't be just the North Slope Borough—it would be government in the unorganized borough."

"There is really, really a need for getting some type of regional government in rural Alaska," Guess said.

The Arctic Slope Native Association has petitioned the Local Affairs agency for a 56 million acre borough, stretching from the Brooks Range to the Arctic to the Arctic Ocean. It would include and tax the rich Prudhoe Bay oil fields.

Oil companies are the major opposition to the move. At hearings in Barrow this past month, four representatives

from major oil companies appeared to present testimony opposed to the Slope Borough proposal. They argued that it would result in inequitable distribution of the oil wealth.

The ASNA argues that their proposed borough fulfills the conditions set out according to Title VII of the Alaska Statutes as well, or better than any other borough in the state.

With the borough form of government, they argue, they could tax the oil companies and use their 10 per cent of state selected lands to develop community services and an educational system.

Without the revenues, as Barrow City Manager, Jack Chenoweth testified, Barrow, at least faces a bleak future.

It's, budget of \$120,000 \$70,000 from sales tax and \$50,000 matching funds provides little room for expansion.

The five communities of the North Slope—Barrow, Wainwright, Point Hope, Anaktuvuk Pass and Kaktovik live in condi-

tions which are in stark contrast to urban Alaska. They argue that since the State of Alaska gained its \$900,000,000 oil bonanza from Prudhoe Bay two years ago, none of that money has gone back to the Slope. Only by an independent tax base, argues ASNA President Joseph Upicksoun, can they be sure services will be provided.

Last week Local Affairs Agency Head Byron Mallott contracted the University of Alaska Institute of Social Economic Government Research to study the hearing and testimony transcripts for the North Slope borough and complete an evaluation.

"What they are looking for is a plan for local government in rural Alaska. I think," said ISEGR professor Thomas Morehouse. The transcript on the borough proposal is still open, according to Mallott and the Local Boundary agency will meet early in January to make its decision.