

# VISTA

George Irvin has conducted another training/orientation program to help the new VISTA Volunteers in the State of Alaska familiarize with the state, Native people, their problems, and possible solutions.

Hopefully, as a result of this effort, volunteers will be able to fit into the community to which they are stationed and get to some of the really deep-rooted problems Alaskans are faced with.

The names and duty stations of the volunteers are: Barbera Baker—Juneau, Jesse Hamilton—Nome, Leonard Busby—Ft. Yukon, Earl Mowen—Galena, Bill Marsh—Juneau, Jeff Smith—Anchorage, Debbie Karz—Bethel, Bob Lohr—Copper Center, Howie Kleiman—Anchorage and Steve Cole—Kodiak.

One of the highlights of the 5-day session was Joli Morgan from Community Enterprise Development Corporation explaining functions and accomplishments of the corporation since its beginning in 1968. Morgan showed a film on the Emmonak Cooperative and spoke of future plans and funding levels of CEDC.

Another film was shown to depict Native village people's problem of getting children educated. Title of the film: The Children Go Away to School, produced by SkyRiver, a former OEO funded media program. The story of the film was William Trader's opinion of his daughter leaving her family and home to attend high school at Wrangell.

Irvin explained that this procedure is "emotionally crippling children in villages of rural Alaska not to mention the effect on the parents and other loved ones."

This problem has resulted from a lack of planning, funding and proper legislation to get high schools into rural Alaska. Although, Alaska Legal Services has filed a suit entitled "Class Action Suit" on the part of the parents of these such children. If this case is won, continued Irvin, it will provide for several high schools in rural communities.

Irvin then progressed into discussing the hows and whys of developing Native controlled borough government. "The only such borough in Alaska is the North Slope Borough in the northern part of Alaska which has been in existence for approximately 1½ years."

"This borough consists of a boundry of 54 million acres and enables Native people within the

realm of the structure to have school rights and proper taxation rights. Native people are getting more and more involved in deciding the laws that govern them," noted Irvin.

Allotments was also a point discussed at the session in which Irvin explained that allotments were not being filed from 1906 because of non-existent knowledge of rights, and a lack of communication.

The Native people that were aware of their rights were forced to file an allotment, explaining the description of their particular allotment on the map, do their own surveying and prove use and occupancy, before their application even had a chance to be awarded.

From 1906—1968, there were approximately 80 allotment applications filed. In 1968 RurAL CAP picked-up the responsibility of informing people of their rights and having a drive to get allotment applications, and at the end of 1971, 8400 applications were on file and due to be processed.

John Shively, Executive Vice-President of AFN, former Director of RurAL CAP, and former VISTA Volunteer, also commented on allotments adding that the rejection rate for allotments is 97 per cent. The use and occupancy affidavit has been agreed upon as legitimate proof of use of the land by applicants.

Shively added, the threat facing rural Alaskan people is a default in the Claims Act stating that at the end of 20 years, the land becomes transferrable and that it may be bought and sold which would result in the ethnic control of the land being lost.

In conclusion, Shively quoted Roger Lang with "Success or failure of the Claims Act will depend on courage, intelligence, and cooperation of Natives with Natives."

The volunteers were very pleased with this training and the session ended on Friday, October 11. Once again, RurAL CAP would like to extend their sincere appreciation to Mr. George Irvin for providing this fine program.