

Fund Drive Begins to Aid Natives Achieve Equality

A \$500,000 national fund drive to help half a million American Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts reach economic, political and social equality with other Americans, was launched last Wednesday, March 31, by the Association on American Indian Affairs.

The Oliver La Farge Indian Fund seeks private, corporate and foundation grants to expand the Association's 6-point program, covering Indian economic and community development, education, health, contemporary crafts, citizenship, and legal defense, according to an announcement of the drive by Alden Stevens, the Association's President.

"Our first Americans — Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts — are our last Americans in sharing the benefits we consider our rights as citizens," he stated.

The Fund was established to honor the memory of the late Oliver La Farge, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, anthropologist, and President of the Association for 30 years until his death in 1963.

Pointing out that the \$500,000 sought by the Oliver La Farge Indian Fund was "minimal in view of the magnitude and gravity of the Indian problem," Stevens said.

"Half a million of them are still victims of chronic destitution, still fighting for a fairer share of America. Their average education spans only five years; life expectancy averages 48 years; Indian median family income is \$1,500; they are 45 per cent unemployed; and 90 per cent of their housing is shockingly inadequate."

Stevens added that while "the problems of poverty, disease, edu-

many Indian reservations in the lower states, Alaska presents the entire range of the same kind of problems in greater measure . . . education and housing are severe enough to make this a major area for the Association's work during

the coming decade."

Stevens stated that the Fund will enable the Association on American Indian Affairs to further carry out the policies established by Oliver La Farge — "Not handouts but guidance and help necessary

for Indians to help themselves, while still keeping the ancient traditions of their own society."

"There are now a number of programs, state and federal, that could help the Indians — if they knew

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what they were, and had the knowledge of how to take advantage of them, and the basic tools with which to start," he continued.

"It is the Association's particular role to provide these; the Oliver La Farge Indian Fund will strengthen our ability to offer education, advice and technical assistance to put Indians in a position to help themselves."

Darwin P. Kingsley of New Canaan, Connecticut, is chairman of the Oliver La Farge Indian Fund drive.

The Association on American Indian Affairs, with headquarters at 432 Park Avenue South, was found-

ed in 1923. William Byler is the Executive Director.