

Villages Victimized—

State Cracks Down on Crooked Fish Buyers

JUNEAU—A crackdown on fly-by-night fish buyers and processors got underway this week as Gov. Walter J. Hickel directed the Departments of Law, Labor and Revenue to intensify their prosecutions of operators who willfully defraud Alaskan workers.

Evidence has now been gathered, Hickel said, which indicates that some firms have avoided paying wages to Alaskan fishermen by deliberately going bankrupt, and then starting a new firm under a new name elsewhere in the state.

"For some firms this is a practice that is repeated year after year," Hickel said. "Many of these companies operate without licenses or bonding, moving to different locations each season, or declaring bankruptcy."

An amount in excess of \$84,000 in unpaid wages has built up, with northwest Alaskans being the principal victims, according to state records, Hickel said. He commented, "In some cases, whole villages have been victimized."

The Department of Labor has furnished information concerning these companies to the Attorney General's office, Hickel said, and currently 132 cases of unpaid wages are being studied for possible prosecutions.