

Outcome of Solid Education May Take Years to Realize

"The outcome of a solid education may take years to realize," a member of the Fairbanks Native Association told legislators at a public meeting here January 11. "But a start now would make people with little opportunity today create great opportunity for the State tomorrow," he added.

Seven leaders of the Fairbanks Native Association (FNA) urged their local legislators to assist in the building of a dormitory in Fairbanks to house out-of-town students who, they propose, would attend the public high school in Fairbanks.

To back up their plea the seven panel members came up with some startling information to show that the Native student of Alaska comes out short in the field of education. They also pointed out the advantages of locating such a dormitory in Fairbanks. Here are some of those facts:

In 1960 there were approximately 5,365 Native children between the ages of 14 and 19 in the state, and only 1,832 were enrolled in high school.

Five years later, in 1965, only 1,491 were enrolled in Chemawa, Oregon, Mt. Edgecombe in Sitka, or in the Wrangell Institute in Wrangell.

Bureau of Indian Affairs operated schools, the FNA panel showed by grade averages in college, "produced students of sub-standard high school education." Their statistics (gathered from a University of Alaska source) indicated that

all BIA graduates have grade point averages lower than all other high schools combined, (small and large) and tremendously lower than public schools in larger population centers.

The Alaska Native Brotherhood endorsed the dormitory concept for out-of-town Native students as far back as 1949.

In 1962 the Chief's Conference delegates in Tanana went on record for the same.

In July 1965, the Governor's Committee on Mental Health advocated essentially the same proposal. Others endorsing the proposal are the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce, the Fairbanks City Council, the North Star Borough School Board Commerce, plus many civic organizations.

There are funds available from these sources for the construction of the proposed dormitory: the Johnson O'Malley Act, Office of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Indian Affairs, State of Alaska.

More than \$8 million has been allocated this year for expansion of facilities at Mt. Edgecombe. Some of this should be diverted to more needed dormitory complexes in urban areas.

Even though the Bureau of Indian Affairs is endeavoring to meet the problems of education (in Alaska), they have expressed their desire to relinquish this problem to the state. The State Constitution says: "The Legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State..."

Boarding facilities are needed in the urban areas of the State and the area north of the

Alaska Range represents one of the major areas of concern.

Closeness to home and the proximity of friends and relatives in town are other advantages of boarding facilities in larger towns.

Saving money for the taxpayer by sending students to Alaskan high schools closer to home would be realized. In 1964 approximately \$43,000 was needed to send 720 students to Oregon. This does not include lay-over expenses like room and board.

From a purely economic standpoint, FNA leaders showed that the Fairbanks and Alaskan economy could be boosted as much as \$1.5 million a year if 500 students were sent to school here. This takes into account maintenance costs, teachers salaries, supplies, etc. These expenses should not go out of state, they suggest.

FNA members participating in the presentation were: Jules Wright, president of the group; Ralph Perdue, former president and now head of the Tanana Chief's Conference; Hugh Fate; Mrs. Mary Jane Fate; Mrs. Dorothy Perdue; Mrs. Marge Wright; and Richard Frank.