

JOM Committee Releases Funds

By MARY JANE FATE

Without the release of Johnson-O'Malley funds, approximately 1500 students would have stayed at home. This would have been tragic for many of the students in the Boarding Home Program who are already sophomores, juniors and seniors. The only alternative would have been schooling through correspondence which at best would have been a hurried crash program without depth nor facilities.

However, now with this action taken by the JOM Committee, they may again attend the Boarding Home schools or have the option of the correspondence school set-up.

The students attend schools in the Boarding Home Program in about 29 different towns in Alaska, including village and urban areas, such as Fort Yukon,

Galena, Kotzebue, Nenana, Dillingham, Nome, Unalaska, Tanana, Cordova, Kodiak, Fairbanks, Seward, Anchorage, etc.

The JOM Executive Committee met before the Budget and Audit Committee on July 31st in Juneau along with representatives of the BIA, State Operated Schools, Dept. of Education, Dept. of Law, Office of the Governor and Dept. of Administration. The JOM group pressed the need of the State of Alaska meeting its responsibility in providing education for all its citizens. The need for local high schools in the rural areas, so the students will have the chance to be with their parents, and the need for recognition of the local parents involvement in their schools. Out of this meeting came immediate planning and action by the BIA, state and others for the coming fall semester.

It was at the JOM meeting August 6, 7 and 8 in Juneau that the committee voted to fund the Boarding home program. Mr. Morris Thompson, Area Director of the BIA, advised the committee at the beginning of the meeting that "the important thing is that we must get 1500 students into school this month."

Commissioner Lind read his Position Paper on the Regional School and Boarding Home Program, dated August 2 1973, in which he stated that his

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department plans to remain an applicant for JOM funds to operate the Boarding Home Program for students who do not have access to a secondary program in their community of residence. Without the JOM Funds the students will be left in their home communities and seek alternative forms of education for them. Correspondence courses would have been the alternative. "It will be necessary however, to obtain the approval of the Governor and the legislative Budget and Audit Committee for a revised program." He invited the native regions to contract with the state to run the programs in their own areas.

Approxiamtely 3.7 of the 4.6 million dollars was approved

by the Committee and the remainder, proposals other than the Boarding Home Program, are to be reviewed and approved before the first of September. Those who may apply for the funds can be native organizations, village schools (not BIA), independent and borough school districts, SOS and others. Types of projects to be funded can be supplemental programs for special needs of native students tutoring, counseling, enrichment classes in culture and language and many others.

Plans are in the process to obtain AFN as the sole contractor administering JOM Funds with guidance of the JOM review committee.

Rural education needs is not a new problem. This could have been solved during territorial days — high standard of education for all Alaskans whether rural or urban. If this state can provide a "crunch" education program for the "oil youth" then we must see that the state meets its far overdue obligation in educating its own peoples.

All efforts should be made in getting the needs of education on top priority in the coming state budget. All parents, students and interested people are encouraged to demand of our elected representatives (who have served on some powerful committees), State Board of

Education members, State Operated School Boards, local school boards and education committees to 'gear up' on the true needs of education for the Alaskan youths. It is up to everyone to put the pressure on the present administration to get the type of education that we want in our areas.