

Sawmills May Finally Operate Next Summer

After troubled starts this year, two BIA-sponsored village sawmills may yet start cutting wood.

But it may be next summer.

Robert Lewis, contract mechanic with the Bureau, is in Minto Now installing the American No. 1 unit there, and plans to go to Noorvik next to iron out troubles at that village.

Noorvik recently complained about improper installation of their mill unit, through the Tundra Times.

A BIA man had spent half an hour instructing village men on how to use the equipment and then left without adjusting the machinery, the villagers charged.

Lewis will conduct a two-week training period for Minto men after he completes installment of the equipment. He will do the same in Noorvik.

Minto workmen at their mill began having trouble with the blade a few weeks ago. They said they could see the blade torqueing, which made the teeth cut unevenly. They closed the machinery down and called for a mechanic.

Lewis took down new saw teeth and then called for new shanks and pulleys for the Minto unit.

"We had quite a problem locating these things," a BIA spokesman in Fairbanks said.

(Continued on Page 7)

Sawmills . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

"We had to go all the way to Seattle for the shanks and then found that we had the last two that were made for the American No. 1 mill."

Minto's mill has a 54-inch circular saw and will produce, when operating, almost-finished quality lumber. A small planer was included with the unit for limited finishing, but will not be large enough for planing all lumber that goes through the mill-

A six-cylinder diesel engine was included with the mill.

Minto formed a village cooperative corporation to manage the sawmill project, which was financed and helped along by the Bureau to provide an economic stimulus in the Minto area.

The project is the first venture between the BIA and villagers of a purely economic nature. Other mills, such as the Noorvik unit and the one installed at Grayling on the Yukon River, were connected with village moves and housing.

The small mills can supply rough boards for the type of building suitable to rural areas.

Joe Field, of Noorvik, wrote the Tundra Times recently and said that the mill there was installed improperly and would have to be completely re-built. Foundations for the equipment were insufficient, the villagers charged.

"There were two White persons and two Native people who went down to look at the mill," Field wrote. "We have logs which we have cut and they are on the beach. We have loans to become businessmen but no sawmill to cut our lumber, and we have to pay on loans this year-\$360. We can't bring most logs here because they might drift away on us."

"We are mad right now and we have to fight fires to pay on loans."