

# Gov. Egan Announces \$45 Million Investment for Housing

The investment of 45 million dollars of Alaska's surplus state funds in Federal Farmer's Home Administration notes was an-

nounced Tuesday by Governor William A. Egan.

Originally designed to provide money to assist farmers in de-

veloping and acquiring land and housing, Farmer's Home money is primarily used in Alaska to finance rural low income hous-

ing. Interest rates for the state will range from 6 7/8 to 7 3/4 per cent on insured notes purchased from the agency for periods of five to ten years. These notes represent loans

made by the Farmer's Home Administration for housing, family farm ownership and community facility projects in rural areas. The administration is a U.S. Department of Agriculture credit union.

## Taos Pueblos Regain Blue Lake...

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con arguments.

Senator Edward Kennedy's office was kind enough to send this paper a copy of the final debates, which include a great deal of the history of the Blue Lake controversy.

Blue Lake, the 48,000 acre area that is at the center of the controversy, is the central focus of the religion of the Taos Pueblo, the religion that impelled its people to refuse a cash settlement for their lands.

"The Taos claim is unique because if Blue Lake and the surrounding lands are not returned to the tribe, it will effectively destroy Taos culture," writes an anthropologist from American University who has made a lifelong study of the Taos Indian culture.

"No other Indian tribe can make that claim, because no other Indian group today relies to the same degree on shrines in a restricted area for the continuance of its religion."

John Boaine, the author of this letter to Senator Lee Metcalf of Montana lived with the Taos Indians for many years and studied their culture after he became an anthropologist.

In his letter to Senator Metcalf, Professor Bodine explains the Taos Indian religion as a sum of many parts. Each integral performer is the guardian of ritual knowledge which he must pass on to a successor. Shrines in the Blue Lake area are, he says, necessary to the performance of rituals and the training of successors in each of the necessary ceremonial roles.

Many Senators in the debate argued that members of the Taos Pueblo would not explain their religion when questioned during Senate subcommittee hearings. Part of this, explains Professor Bodine, is the result of past discriminations and persecutions which caused the religion to go underground. Also, he said, it was a result of the fragmented character of the religious practices.

This particular culture value, and the historic claim of the Taos Indians on these lands, are the basis on which they fought their battle to regain them.

Among their supporters, is President Richard M. Nixon, who advocated return of the Blue Lake area to the Taos Pueblo

in his message to the Congress on Indian affairs on July 8, 1970.

Among the vociferous supporters of the Indian claim to trust title was Senator Fred Harris of Oklahoma, one of the sponsors of the Harris-Griffin amendment.

This amendment overrode the so called Anderson amendment bill which was reported out of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs committee. The Anderson bill provided for the use of the land by the Taos Indians, but not for the granting of trust title.

Harris, along with many other Senators, including Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, considered the Harris-Griffin amendment necessary to requite at least one of the injustices done to the Indian people.

"If the Senate wishes to dwell on precedents," Senator Harris told that body, "then it should be reminded of the precedence for destroying the culture, heritage, religion and pride of the American Indian—precedence for this is plentiful."

Under the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War, the American Government assumed sovereignty over all of New Mexico, including the land claimed by the Taos Pueblo.

The Blue Lake area became part of the public domain, not part of the reservation granted to the Taos Pueblo though it had been used by them for ceremonial and other purposes since at least the 13th century.

In 1906, the area was incorporated into the Carson National Forest.

The special interests of the Taos Pueblo in Blue Lake were recognized in a special use permit issued to them in 1940 which controlled access by outsiders.

Increasing use of the area for recreation or other Forest Service "multiple use" programs made them continue to seek title to the land.

Most of the arguments against granting such title, as advanced by Senator Lee Metcalf of Montana, Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington and others rested upon the precedent which might be set by giving American Indians back their land.

The United States had historically awarded tribes money as compensation for land. With most of America's land claimed by one Indian group or another, this could create dangerous precedents, the Senators said.

Opposition Senators also cited fears that the area would be developed, rather than remain a watershed and wilderness area. They cited support from various conservation groups.

"It will open the door to similar requests for transfer in trust for national parks, wilderness areas, national monuments and all these things that we thought were secure for the benefit, in the public interest, of all the people," said Senator Metcalf.

The final bill which passed the Senate was substantially the Harris-Griffin version, which followed the form of a bill previously passed in the House of Representatives.

Under the terms of the Senate bill, the Blue Lake area would be maintained as a wilderness, with its use restricted to the ceremonial purposes of the Taos Pueblo people who hold trust title to it.

## Air Fares Segregate...

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bush are also high—acting to raise the cost of living to unbelievable heights in areas where the average cash income is under \$3,000 per year.

The high transport tariffs charged bulky objects, such as automobiles and boats, "constitute a definite factor in the ability of a rural family to improve its local transportation and generally upgrade its living conditions."

A snowmobile may be 25 per cent or more expensive in rural areas than in Fairbanks or Anchorage. Oil and gas fuels are difficult to transport, expensive to buy in the villages, thus limiting their use of heating, lighting and operating vehicles.

The Federal Field committee report foresees no decrease in these costs in the near future due to technical improvements, since most villages do not use bulk shipments.

What the high air fares have done in rural Alaska is to leave to government agencies selection of which persons shall travel out of the villages.

This selection normally falls to students, who travel to high school, and to sick persons being taken to hospital facilities.

Reduced fares are given to military, who rarely use intra-Alaskan services and businessmen and government officials who use three to five day excursion fares.

"That segment of the community which would normally have the most need for mobility, the young adults, are the most disadvantaged by this system. They are out of school and still healthy, therefore must pay the standard or tourist fare to travel unless some special program is created."

The system tends to discourage the villager from making the move to the city to find work. A one way trip to an urban area may utilize the family's entire cash resources. If he fails to succeed on his first try at upward mobility, the villager may never again have the funds to attempt a second try.

"There is a myth current in Alaska and the United States in general that Alaskan Natives and other American Indians are not interested in upward mobility within the larger society, but desire to exist as an ethnographic enclave within the nation."

This thesis does not take note of the desperate efforts that are made by many families to provide a chance at such mobility for at least one member of the family.

Such efforts involve the sacrifice of equipment that would provide an easier life in the village in order that a chance for betterment may be given a son or daughter.

The barriers imposed by high transportation costs, preventing any reasonable frequency in trips between the village and the city imprison Alaska's village people either as "a dissatisfied villager or an unsuccessful adapter to the larger society."

What Alaska lacks, is low cost alternative means of transportation between village and city. Without highways, there is no bus service or hitchhiking, the transportation that eased the gap between village and

city in the lower 48 and many European countries. Water transport is impractical for long distances.

Low cost transportation allows the prospective city resident to make the trip from home to city several times before a final decision is reached.

Transportation costs and problems effectively segregate the rural Native and urban white. The great bulk of Alaska's suburban citizens have no empirical knowledge of Native life.

The urban Alaskan does not know his state, except for the small areas of Anchorage and those areas connected to it by highway.

Before the fur and mining industries in Alaska declined, many villages in Alaska had mixed white-Native populations. Now, these are few, with the only major source of white resident government employees.

Unless some means is found to bring white people back to the villages, either on a full or part time basis, there is no basis for political unity in Alaska, this report proposes.

The gap between living standards of urban whites and rural Natives is so wide that it can hardly be bridged.

Compare the plush subdivisions of suburban Anchorage with the log cabins in Bethel and other villages.

What can be done to remedy this situation? How can communication be improved between the urban and rural Alaskan—the Native in the village and the city dweller in his suburban subdivision?

Solutions, the Federal Field Committee report proposes, must be related to social or economic goals. Little improvement can be expected from improvement in air facilities and bulk transport, in either passenger or cargo rates. Only by providing significantly lower air fare rates per mile can some improvement be made in decreasing the economic disparities between Alaska's regions.

The present high fares or a fare increase, means improvements in air service will be financed by the state and federal health and education budgets—the agencies that send the children to school and the patients to hospitals.

The transportation report makes several suggestions for reduced fares. Among these are: student and adult stand-by fares on all intra-Alaskan routes family plan fares on all such routes, and a general reduction in standard fares to more approximate those available in the contiguous states.

The report proposes that savings in government travel budgets will partially offset increased air subsidies.

The report also calls for special provisions for Western Alaska. Air rates adjusted to a reasonable percentage of income would increase social mobility and standards of living.

The goal of these provisions would be an increase "in the unprogrammed interaction between rural and urban Alaska; for the Natives, for those urban Alaskans who have no concept of the extent and diversity of their state and for tourists who make the long drive to Alaska and never see the places beyond the roads."

## Public Defender...

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is easy for the magistrate in a small town to lean heavily on the advice of the trooper in the town. There can be substantial advantages to the defendant in being tried by a district judge, especially when points of law or personal feelings are involved."

One result of the magistrate system and the lack of representation is that sentences given to prisoners from small villages tend to be higher than sentences handed down for the same crimes in Fairbanks.

Public defenders rarely get appointed by magistrates in bush cases. When the defendant pleads not guilty, the magistrate can set a bail of \$500 and send the man to Fairbanks, to be close to his lawyer.

"They'll stay in jail till they raise bail or we get him out," Madsen explained. "Our feeling is if a guy comes in and pleads guilty, the magistrate should hold off till there are two or three such cases. Then, call us, set a date, and the defender's office will fly a lawyer there. We'll even do it for one case. Nora Guinn at Bethel does this and the system works very well."

With a client being held in jail, the defenders must often plead guilty, to get his client free as soon as possible.

Most of the public defender's office's work for the villages is done in the felony cases which are brought to Fairbanks for trial. These are the serious cases—murder, rape, burglary, assault and battery, etc.

A defendant will be brought to Fairbanks for arraignment, released on bail without means often to return to his village. He may be required to return to Fairbanks for trial as much as a year or more after the crime has been committed.

Trying cases involving crimes committed in villages in Fairbanks poses peculiar problems for both prosecution and defense lawyers. The district attorney must arrange for witnesses to come to Fairbanks.

"The travel difficulty bogs down the whole system," says public defender Madsen. Cases from the Bethel area may in-

volve language problems, necessitating search for an interpreter who speaks the correct dialect.

In cases which range up to first degree murder, it is essential the defendant understand what his lawyer is trying to do for him.

"Sometimes I wonder if my clients from the villages really understand what I'm saying to them," Madsen says. "Lots of times they'll act completely on my advice. I have to be doubly sure they understand."

Many defendants brought to Fairbanks have no understanding of the process which brought them there, or the process which faces them.

One measure of differences in administration of justice in the town and in the bush is that sentences for felonies in Fairbanks where defendants have counsel are often lower than the sentences given for being drunk in public in the bush.

Alcohol is a cause, or a factor in almost every crime by Natives says Madsen. It will be a factor in a fight, burglary, or almost any other violence.

In the towns, the majority of the crimes Native persons commit are misdemeanors, mainly drunk in public, disorderly conduct and other such crimes. A study which Mr. Madsen prepared for the American Bar Association recently showed Natives committing a far lower percentage of serious crimes than their percentage of the population.

The problem in the villages is there is no one available to give information at the time a person is charged with a crime. Better information and education, says Madsen, could greatly improve villagers' knowledge of their rights under the law.

"If we are to serve all of those misdemeanor cases, we don't have enough staff or travel money. If we're to provide people with their rights under the constitution, we'll have to have more staff, mobility and money, and a more flexible system that will allow cases to be tried in the bush," said the public defender.