

Bethel House Prefab Plant Under Study

Senator E. L. (Bob) Bartlett announced last week that a combination of federal agencies and departments, including Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska, Economic Development Administration, Bureau of Indian Affairs and Department of Housing and Urban Development, has under study proposal for housing prefabrication plant to be located in Bethel area to provide housing for Alaska's remote villages.

Housing produced by plant could be used by Alaska Native Housing Program or any of other federally sponsored housing programs designed to meet needs of low income families. "I hope," Senator Bartlett stated, "that we shall see the proposal become an active program this year. It is a complicated proposal, requiring the combined efforts of nearly every federal agency concerned with the problems of unemployed, low-income people. No estimation of cost can yet be made."

The proposal, still in study form, includes prefabrication of housing components during winter for construction of housing during summer, thus providing year-round employment opportunities. Housing produced by proposed plant could be used in Bethel and nearby communities if trans-

portation difficulties can be solved.

If adopted, it is proposed that Alaska State Housing Authority work with villages in administration of community housing programs. In 1965 Senator Bartlett introduced Alaska Native Housing Act which became law in 1966.

Initial financing of program in the amount of \$1 million was requested in administration budget for fiscal year 1968, but House of Representatives refused to appropriate funds.

President Johnson has again requested \$1 million in his fiscal year 1969 budget to begin the program. On February 14, Office of Economic Opportunity announced approval of its cooperative program with Rural Electrification Administration to finance electrification of 67 remote villages.

"At long last," Senator Bartlett said, "proposals are good that efforts to improve living conditions in the native villages will be translated into reality. I am pleased and gratified that the federal government is moving to help our native people. These programs, combined with intensified efforts on the part of federal agencies to increase employment opportunities for Alaska Natives, mean that we can move ahead in the development of all areas of Alaska."