

# LAST WEEK IN ALASKA

A weekly summary of Alaska News prepared for the TUNDRA TIMES by ALASKA RADIO NEWS.

**A CITIZENS' GROUP IN VALDEZ** has completed its survey of unemployed in their city. The survey is the latest incident in a fight between the city residents and the State Labor Department. The Labor Department puts unemployment in Valdez at 13 percent. But the leader of the Valdez group, Tom McIntyre, says their survey showed a rate closer to 50 percent. "We went to every home and mobile home in Valdez," said McIntyre. "In one residence, we found one employed and six unemployed." McIntyre said all residents of at least 18 years of age were counted in the survey, as were housewives.

**THE TEAMSTERS SAFETY COMPLAINTS** ON the North Slope Haul Road have been resolved. The Teamsters stayed off the road for almost two weeks claiming lack of facilities and poor maintenance made it unsafe. According to the plan approved by Teamsters, Alyeska and the Alaska Transportation Employers Association, the drivers will radio into check points. If a driver doesn't arrive, searchers will be sent out. The agreement also allows the drivers to stop at pump stations to eat at regular meal times.

**A DELEGATION OF NATIVE LEADERS** met with Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus for two hours. Following the meeting, Doyon President Tim Wallis said transfer of land entitlements, navigability, easements and d-2 were discussed with Andrus. Wallis says they will bring back to Alaska a better understanding of the time they will have available in dealing with land conveyances. "The secretary will take our positions under consideration," said Wallis, "and will notify (us) shortly of his decisions." Wallis said the meeting was significant because it was the first substantial discussion with the secretary since passage of the land claims settlement act.

**THE ALASKA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION** is considering a rate request from the Alaska Village Electric Cooperative. Consumers in the 48 villages now served by AVEC currently pay about 29 cents per kilowatt hour. That compares with about 4 cents per kwh paid by Anchorage customers. The Rural Electrification Administration provided the funds which created the electrical programs administered by AVEC. But R.E.A. field representative Malcolm Cheek says village consumers can't afford to pay any more. "Proposals for increasing the rates as high as 41 cents per kwh may make the project unfeasible," said Cheek, "and the federal government would have no alternative but to withdraw its funding from this particular utility." Cheek suggested that the state subsidize the program. He said such a subsidy would have to be between \$300,000 and \$700,000 annually.

**SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR CECIL Andrus** has presented the Carter Administration's d-2 proposal to the Congress. It would place 92 million acres of land under wilderness designations. Alaska's Republicans in Congress, Don Young and Ted Stevens, accused the administration of not adequately studying the issue before deciding what land to set aside. "Well, that's simply not true," said Andrus. "But I know the side that Senator Stevens and Congressman Young are coming from, and they are entitled to their opinion...Alaska has been quite well studied...it's time now that we make a resolution of the problem or we will see it fall into the same rows as the Lower 48 where they kept chipping away at all their resources until there just wasn't much left."

**GOVERNOR HAMMOND TRAVELED TO WASHINGTON** last week to join Alaska's Congressional delegation in testifying before the Senate Energy and Resources Committee on d-2 legislation. Hammond told the committee that figures on acreage are not the crucial issue. "It's not the total acreage that's important," said Hammond. "It's where the lines are drawn. You could do great violence with only 25 million acres in so far as frustrating rational resource development in the state of Alaska, or you could do virtually no violence at all with 100 million if it were so located to minimize those concerns."

**THE SEIBERLING SUBCOMMITTEE REJECTED** A compromise d-2 proposal by Washington Congressman Lloyd Meeds. The Meeds bill, according to Congressman Don Young, would have allowed more time for study of possible wilderness lands and would have lowered the acreage placed in wilderness categories.

## ● X-CED

**CONTINUED OFF OF PAGE ONE**  
Fund monies amount to \$52,000. In addition, a \$95,000 grant from the Department of Environmental Conservation supports a few graduate assistants who bolster the academic part of the program by providing field assistance to undergraduate students.

Alarmed that the X-CED program might become the victim of budgetary politics, students from across the state met in Tanana in December to launch a united effort aimed at informing lawmakers and the public of the plight of the program. In a letter to Alaska Federation of Natives President Byron Mallott, X-CED student Ava Walsh, who chairs the program's statewide policy-making consortium, wrote:

"Unless X-CED gets state support those...active undergraduate students currently enrolled in X-CED will not be able to continue their education in the fall of 1978. Many of our students are approaching their senior year, and without your support of our program in the State Legislature we feel this unique and successful program will face losing some very important goals by moving away from rural Alaska."

In addition to doubt about funding X-CED's administrative costs, students must individually worry about financial support for their tuition and books. Funds for these purposes have come primarily from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Department of Labor under the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA). Apparently, at least in the Interior, because of communications difficulties between the funding sources, the two local organizations that disperse funds to students (Dena Aka, Inc., CETA and the Tanana Chiefs Conference, BIA), and X-CED, students have not known from semester to semester if they were going to have any tuition support at all.

Like anything else, X-CED has its detractors. One source who spoke to the Tundra Times as this issue went to press alluded to a high drop-out rate among X-CED students, poor individual performance and extravagant spending practices by X-CED staff. Such allegations would naturally lead to speculation that X-CED students are receiving instruction in the field of education under less

rigorous standards than on-campus education majors. This in turn could cast a pall over the ability of the students to teach after they graduate.

Yet X-CED students seem highly motivated, despite other responsibilities and the distraction of putting up the political fight to save their programs. Many are determined to stick with their families and their education, even though they must look forward to five years of work before completing their degrees instead of the standard four.

Although the road to the rural classroom seems long for X-CED students, there are small compensations along the way. For graduate student Joyce Shales, it is the realization that Native children can receive a quality education without losing their Native identity.

"The important thing is that Native people learn that what they think is true and valid. This kind of thing is critical if we're going to change Native education without putting down the Native culture, giving it the respect it deserves."

For under-grad Thelma Saunders of Kaltag, X-CED has made the impossible possible:

"I've always been interested in becoming a teacher, but I have six kids; the last time I was in a classroom was 1964. With X-CED, I could take care of my kids in my home and still get an education."

The students of the X-CED program are in the forefront of a broader group of young Native people who have begun to discover that village life and the traditions with which they were raised hold a certain value and are worthy of passing on to another generation. They feel X-CED is one tool they can use to hold their way of life together.

## ● Hammond

**CONTINUED OFF OF PAGE SIX**  
will be required to provide adequate assistance to agricultural expansion in Alaska without incurring a clearly unacceptable level of subsidization. No secret is made of the need for initial subsidy. No costs are calculatedly obscured. No argument raised as to the fact that certainly such a project is a gamble. However, it is the sort of gamble we must be prepared to take if we hope that agriculture will play a role in providing a rewarding future for Alaskans through renewable resource development.

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