

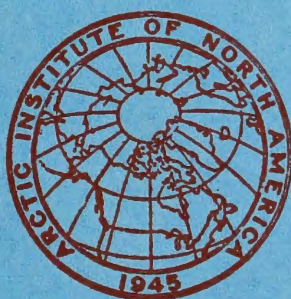
ARCTIC INSTITUTE OF NORTH AMERICA

TECHNICAL PAPER NO. 10

ESKIMO ADMINISTRATION: I. ALASKA

By

DIAMOND JENNESS



PUBLISHED JULY 1962

THE ARCTIC INSTITUTE OF NORTH AMERICA

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ESKIMO ADMINISTRATION

I: ALASKA

This account of Eskimo administration in Alaska constitutes the first part of a larger study that will embrace the Eskimo administrations in Canada and Greenland. The author gratefully acknowledges the support given to its preparation by the Northern Coordination and Research Centre of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources in Ottawa.

ESKIMO ADMINISTRATION: I. ALASKA

Diamond Jenness

PERIOD I: 1867-96

Early years

Russia sold Alaska to the United States in 1867. At that period the peninsula contained perhaps 18,000 Eskimos, who occupied the coast and immediate hinterland from the arctic boundary with Canada to the Gulf of Alaska, excluding the chain of the Aleutian Islands, where a slightly different people, the Aleuts, had been ruthlessly exploited and almost exterminated by the Russian fur trade company. The Eskimos themselves had not entirely escaped this exploitation, but they still adhered to the pattern of life handed down to them by their forefathers, still preserved their non-monetary, subsistence economy based on fishing and the hunting of land and sea mammals. Their contacts with white men, though increasing, were still very limited; their ranks had been thinned by smallpox in the earlier years of the century, but were not yet decimated by those other diseases, measles, influenza, and tuberculosis, which civilization has carried all around the globe. Iron cooking-vessels, it is true, had replaced most of their clay pots; iron tools and weapons were ousting their primitive implements of bone and stone; and the deadly firearm was slowly superseding their inefficient bows and arrows. Nevertheless, the day-to-day life held to the same course that it had followed for centuries, food remained abundant, and the supply of whales, walrus, seals, caribou, and salmon showed no signs of diminution.

Russia retired, and the United States, Alaska's new owner, began to push wider ajar the Eskimos' door. At first Washington herself pushed rather lightly, for down to 1884, when it passed the First Organic Act, Congress looked upon the newly purchased territory as virtually useless, and believed it had fully acquitted its duty there when it laid the whole responsibility for maintaining law and order on the Revenue-Marine ("Coastguard") branch of the Department of the Treasury. A quarter of a century earlier, in 1841, fifty whaling vessels from Boston and New Bedford had found their way into the Bering Sea; and by 1852 this whaling fleet had increased to 278 vessels, with a catch valued at \$14 millions. That year saw the peak of the industry; but for many years thereafter scores of whaling and sealing vessels continued to frequent the Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean, where their undisciplined crews quarrelled among themselves and demoralized the Eskimo communities along the north Alaskan coastline. Equally destructive to the tranquillity of native life were the traders, whose schooners, laden with alcohol, began to visit every

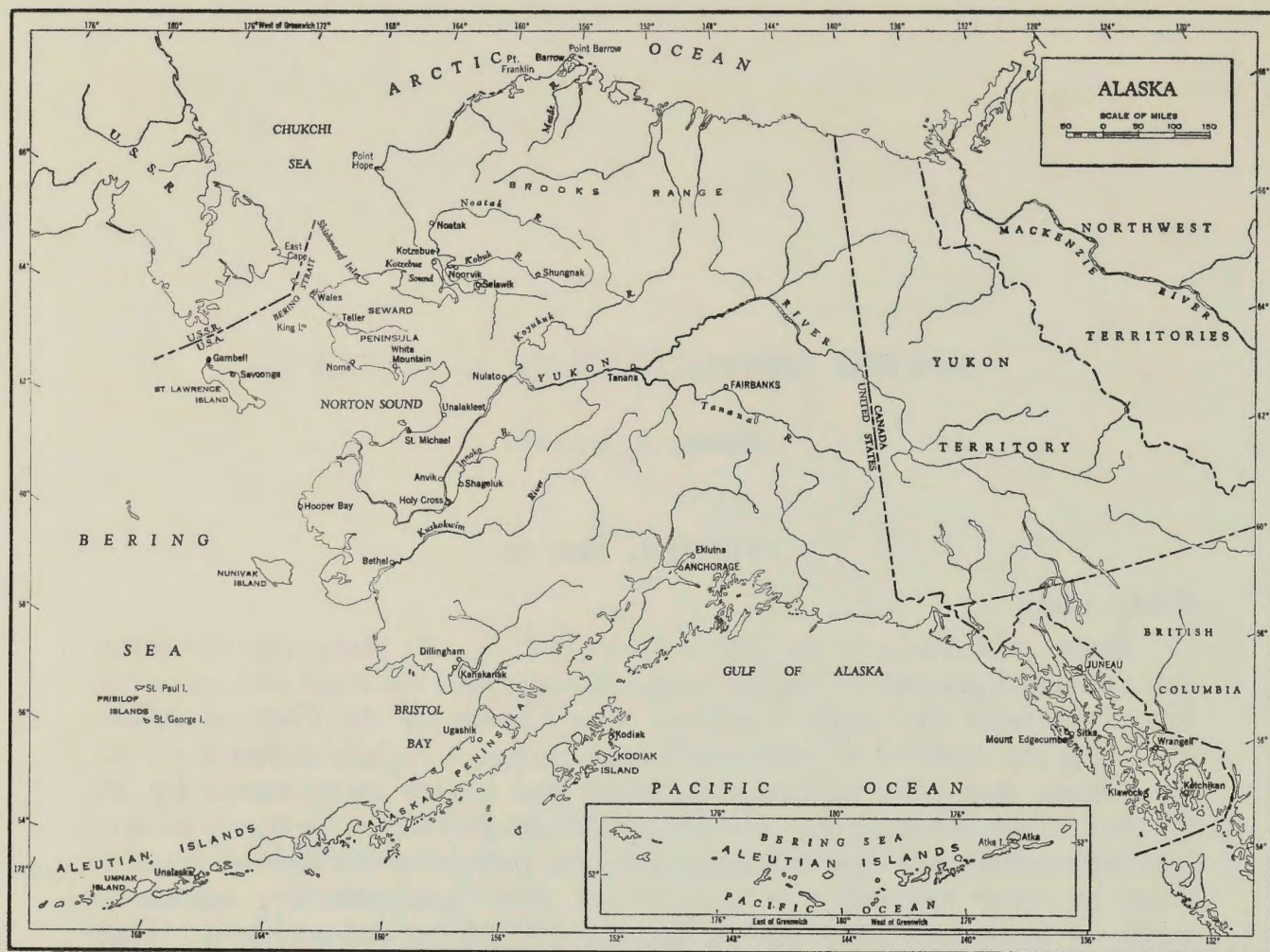


Fig. 1. General sketch-map of Alaska.

settlement along the coast, paying sometimes a single bottle of whisky for furs that brought \$200 in the United States. These conditions prevailed for nearly twenty years after the United States took over the territory; yet throughout the entire period the sole evidence of any government authority was the flag of the Revenue Service steamer, which patrolled each summer the thousands of miles of coastline from Kodiak Island to Unalaska, and from Unalaska to Point Barrow at the northern tip of the continent. Its captain bore orders from Washington to perform all necessary police functions in the area and, in addition,

“to assist when disaster or shipwreck overtakes the whalers, to search after missing vessels, to note the bearing of different points of land, islands, etc., to determine the position of all bars and reefs encountered, to keep a record of tides and currents, to take meteorological and astronomical observations for the benefit of commerce, to investigate scientific phenomena, and inquire into the mode of life, political and social relations of the native population, and make collections for the Smithsonian Institution, and to perform many other services beneficial to commerce, science, and humanity.” (U.S. Bur. Ed. 1893, p. 1,261).

All these instructions the captain loyally fulfilled, so far as was humanly possible. And the service he rendered to humanity was perhaps not the least of his accomplishments; for he invariably carried a medical officer, the only medical man available to thousands of natives and hundreds of white sailors in arctic and subarctic Alaska down to the closing years of the century.

For many years, however, Washington remained coldly indifferent to the valiant efforts of its revenue steamer: it wilfully closed its eyes to the plight of its Eskimo subjects, desperately struggling against a flood of calamities

that threatened their total destruction. The white men who had invaded them from an unknown world to the south were rapidly overturning the social framework of their communities, and the powerful rifles that the strangers distributed were destroying the animals on which the natives depended for their daily food. Fewer whales and walrus began to frequent the Bering Sea and migrate northward into the Arctic Ocean, fewer caribou to wander over the inland tundra, where they had supported a population complementary to the population that dotted the coast. The traffic in fox and other furs which the white traders encouraged offered little compensation for this diminution in the game animals, since foxes could not supply a daily ration of meat, nor warm and durable clothing that would replace the clothing made from caribou hides. In some places competition for the glittering traffic with the whites engendered inter-community strife; and everywhere new diseases decimated the Eskimos, diseases of which they had no experience and for which they knew no names. So throughout those early years there was a widespread decline in the population: whole settlements were abandoned, entire districts denuded of all their inhabitants. It may be true that the decline had already set in south of Bering Strait during the early part of the nineteenth century, in the period of Russian suzerainty; but both there and farther north it was accelerated by the activities of the whaling ships.

Estimates of the Eskimo population prior to 1890, crude as they are, confirm the gloomy reports of contemporary explorers and the opinions of later travellers. Here are figures for four communities north of Bering Strait (Jackson, 1891, p. 5):

Place	Population		
	1828	1863	1890
Point Barrow	1,000	309	100
Point Franklin	large	?	nil
Point Hope	2,000	?	350
Shishmaref Inlet	1,000-2,000	?	3 houses

A United States government report published in 1891 ascribed this decline in the Eskimo population solely to the diminution of the chief game animals through excessive hunting. Judging from native recollections, however, and from what happened to the Mackenzie River delta Eskimos toward the end of the century, there were two other causes equally if not more important, namely, the ravages of introduced diseases, and the disorders provoked by alcoholic liquors which the Eskimos bought from the traders or were taught to brew themselves.

First Organic Act, 1884

In 1884 international competition in the salmon and fur-seal fisheries, and a mounting interest in the mineral resources of Alaska, combined with the pressure exerted by certain missionary societies to extract from Congress the First Organic Act, which considerably strengthened the administrative control of the United States over its neglected territory in the north. Prior to this act there had been

"no law for the collection of debts, the support of education, the conveyance of property, the administration of estates, or the enforcement of contracts; none, indeed, for the punishment of criminals except such as offend against certain customs, commerce, and navigation acts." (U.S. Bur. Ed. 1896, p. 1,449).

The Organic Act created

"a governor at a salary of \$3,000, a judge at \$3,000, a district attorney at \$2,500, a marshal at \$2,500, a clerk at \$2,500, four commissioners at \$1,000 each and fees, and four deputy marshals at \$750 each and fees. These officers are appointed by the President, with the exception of the deputy marshals, who are appointed by the marshal. The seat of government is established at Sitka. The four commissioners and four deputy marshals are to reside respectively at Sitka, Wrangell, Juneau, and Unalaska.

"The laws of Oregon, so far as applicable, are extended over the district. . . . No provision is made for a territorial legislature or a delegate in Congress. The general land laws of the United States are not extended over the country. The squatter rights of Indians and others are recognized. Mission stations are continued in the occupancy of the 640 acres now claimed by them. The owners of mining claims can perfect their titles in the usual way. . . .

"The Secretary of the Interior is directed to select two of the officers, who, together with the governor, shall constitute a commission to examine into and report upon the condition of the Indians residing in said Territory; what lands, if any, should be reserved for their use; what provision shall be made for their education . . .

"The importation, manufacture, and sale of intoxicating liquors in said district, except for medicinal, mechanical, and scientific purposes, are prohibited.

"The Secretary of the Interior is directed to *make needful and proper provision for the education of the children of school age in the Territory of Alaska, without reference to race*,¹ until such time as permanent provision shall be made for the same, and the sum of \$25,000 is appropriated for this purpose." (U.S. Bur. Ed. 1896, p. 1,449).²

Law enforcement

The Organic Act brought a semblance of organized government to Alaska, although the legislators who framed it appear to have been scarcely conscious of the vast area north of the Gulf of Alaska. They decreed that three of the four commissioners, and three of the four deputy marshals, should be stationed at Sitka, Wrangell, and Juneau respectively, the fourth commissioner, and the fourth deputy marshal, at Unalaska; but they made no provision for stationing any government official in the Bering Sea region or farther north where the population was almost exclusively Eskimo. It was the far-sighted policy of the Secretary of the Interior's educational officers, strongly supported by the intelligent captain of the Revenue Service's patrol vessel, that swiftly brought this northern region also under administrative control.

That control, it should be noticed, neither included nor was deemed to require the stationing of any judicial or police officer in the Bering Sea or farther north. Throughout that predominantly Eskimo area the captain of the revenue steamer, single-handed, administered the law to natives and white men alike; he alone possessed the authority to arrest, and transport south for trial, those who were guilty of any crime. At this period, it would seem, the United States government anticipated very little lawlessness in the region, at least among the Eskimos, although the natives of Wales had been notorious pirates earlier in the century and as late as 1893 murdered a Congregational missionary who had opened a school in their village. Two disgruntled youths committed that crime on their own initiative, but their elders immediately registered the community's disapproval by shooting them out of hand. Under United States law, of course, the executioners themselves could have been indicted for murder; but the authorities wisely closed their eyes to the incident, recognizing that the

¹Italics are author's.

²For the full text of the Act see Jackson (1886, Appendix B).

region was still imperfectly organized and that the Eskimos had conscientiously obeyed their old "tribal law". To help the new school-teacher, however, and to ensure the attendance and good behaviour of the children, the captain of the revenue steamer selected ten natives to be "policemen",—or, more accurately, truant officers—promising to each man one sack of flour yearly and to their chief and assistant chief two and one extra sacks respectively. Neither at Wales nor at any other Eskimo village did the authorities experience any further trouble. As far as I have discovered, indeed, no law enforcement officer was ever stationed in Eskimo territory until 1900, four years after the beginning of the Klondike gold rush; and then it was the white miners, not the natives, who necessitated the stationing of a judge at Nome with soldiers to uphold his authority.

Education

The Organic Act, as we have seen, directed the Secretary of the Interior to provide proper education for all Alaskan children of school age, irrespective of race; and it allocated for that purpose the immediate sum of \$25,000. Now in the judgment of the responsible officers of the Interior Department the policy of preserving, or attempting to preserve, the old tribal life of Indians and Eskimos—a policy that had been adopted several generations before in dealing with the Indian tribes of the United States proper—had proved not only futile but disastrous. From the very beginning, therefore, they laid down the principle that

*"the education to be provided for the natives of Alaska should fit them for the social and industrial life of the white population of the United States and promote their not-too-distant assimilation."*¹

That principle, first enunciated in the 1880's, has lain dormant from time to time, but during its periods of active acceptance it has guided the Alaskan administration right down to the present day.

Qualified observers such as the late Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen—who was himself of part-Eskimo descent and spoke the Eskimo language before he learned Danish—believe that history has amply proved the wisdom of such a policy. They believe, furthermore, that it has justified the regulations, issued by the Department of the Interior in 1890, that logically followed from it, namely,

*"The children shall be taught in the English language, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, oral history, physiology, and temperance hygiene. No text-books printed in a foreign language shall be allowed. Special efforts shall be put forth to train the pupils in the use of the English language."*² (U.S. Bur. Ed. 1893, p. 1,254).

¹I carelessly omitted to record the source of this quotation, and have been unable to retrace it; but the following passage from 'Education in Alaska 1896-97', Chap. XXV of the Report of the Commissioner of Education, lays down the same principle in very similar terms:

"The Bureau of Education has been charged with the care of education in Alaska. The object proposed from the beginning by the commissioners preceding me, General Eaton and Colonel Dawson, has been to provide such education as to prepare the natives to take up the industries and modes of life established in the States by our white population, and by all means not try to continue the tribal life after the manner of the Indians in the western States and Territories." (U.S. Bur. Ed. 1898, p. xlix).

²Italics are author's.

The writer himself would favour a reasonably broad interpretation of these regulations, and would permit books and papers in other tongues (including Eskimo) to be used for supplementary reading. However, this would in no way negate the regulations, but merely clarify them.

It was obvious from the outset that the sum of \$25,000 yearly (even though it was equivalent to three and perhaps four times that sum today) could not begin to provide all the teachers and school buildings required by so vast a territory. It happened, however, that the man whom the Secretary of the Interior appointed as General Agent of Education for Alaska, Dr. Sheldon Jackson, had been a very active secretary of the Presbyterian Missions. Moreover, several missionary organizations had already entered the southern part of Alaska and opened some schools in the panhandle. In laying the foundations of an educational system throughout the territory, therefore, it was virtually inevitable that the government should cooperate with the missionary societies rather than compete with them or attempt to drive them out of the field. The Protestant societies themselves facilitated such collaboration by holding a conference in which they decided that there should be no overlapping of efforts, but that each Protestant denomination should confine itself to the district allotted to it by the conference. How this worked out can be seen from the list of schools that were operating north of the Aleutian Archipelago in 1890:

Carmel	operated by Moravian Mission
Bethel	Moravian Mission
Anvik	Episcopal Mission
Kosoriffsky (Holy Cross)	Roman Catholic Mission
Nulato	Roman Catholic Mission
Cape Prince of Wales	Congregational Mission
Point Hope	Episcopal Mission
Point Barrow	Presbyterian Mission

Unhappily the arrangement was not watertight. Because only certain Protestant denominations participated in the conference, the Roman Catholic and some other churches were not bound by its decision; and in the 1920's and later two sects overlapped and sparked a little friction in Kotzebue Sound and other places. Most of the missionary bodies, however, scrupulously observed the agreement, the Russian Orthodox Church continued to function undisturbed in the lower Yukon, and for a long time Alaska escaped the unseemly competition and strife that has accompanied the proselytizing activities of different sects in both northern and southern Canada. It was the United States, indeed, that initiated that missionary "division of fields" policy which Australia adopted so successfully twenty years later in British New Guinea ('Papua'). One may perhaps speculate that American Protestant leaders of eighty years ago had not yet forgotten the rivalry and strife that half a century earlier had marred the activities of missionary denominations in the Pacific Ocean, where on one occasion two tribes that shared the same island, but had been "converted" to different Christian faiths, chanted rival hymns as they joined in pitched battle; and the victors cooked and ate the corpses of the vanquished!

By 1890, scarcely six years after the passage of the Organic Act, the United States could point to no fewer than 35 schools¹ in Alaska, established at a total

¹There were also 2 schools on the Pribilof Islands run by the North American Commercial Company under contract with the Treasury Department. In addition the Russian Government still maintained Russo-Greek schools in southern Alaska.

cost to the government of only \$205,000. They comprised:

- 16 day schools wholly supported by the government;
- 9 contract schools jointly supported by the government and missionary societies;
- 10 mission schools wholly supported by church funds.

These 35 schools extended all the way from the panhandle to Point Barrow at the extreme tip of Alaska; the great majority, naturally, were in the panhandle. Slightly fewer than half were lay schools maintained by the government alone. As the Commissioner of Education stated in 1896:

"From the beginning, in 1885-86 on to 1893-94, it had been the policy of the Bureau of Education to subsidize mission schools in all places where it was not possible to establish Government day schools. . . . In the southeastern region, in the presence of a larger or smaller contingent of white population, it has been found possible to establish Government schools and organize local school committees to supervise them. But in northern and western Alaska, villages with a nucleus of white population are not to be found, except at the ports of Unalaska and St. Michael; and in order to reach the natives successfully, it is necessary to avail one's self of the mission stations . . .

"In subsidizing the mission schools a certain minimum of school enrollment has been required, and a certain sum per pupil allowed, not to exceed in the aggregate a fixed sum agreed upon." (U.S. Bur. Ed. 1898, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii).

The steady exploration of Alaska during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the growth of white colonization in the more southern districts, and the increased interest in the fisheries, furs, and minerals farther north, undoubtedly justified this subsidizing of missionary schools in order to provide minimum educational facilities without undue delay. Nevertheless, such subsidies ran counter to the tide of both official and lay opinion, which then and later sharply separated church from state;¹ and in 1895 they were abolished entirely. Thenceforward the government itself assumed full responsibility for the maintenance of a satisfactory day-school system, although for a limited period afterwards it assigned a few teachers to missionary schools. The latter continued to exist, and exist today, for many of them are orphanages as well as boarding schools; but they are financed by church funds alone and receive no direct support from either the federal government in Washington, or the new state government in Juneau, Alaska.

Breakdown of aboriginal subsistence economy

By the end of the nineteenth century, as was mentioned earlier, excessive destruction with high-powered rifles had so reduced the numbers of the larger sea and land animals that the old subsistence economy of the Eskimos collapsed, and most of their communities north of Bering Strait, and several south of it, found themselves menaced with starvation. Bewildered, they took a path from which there was no return: they bound themselves to the money economy of the white man, and sought any occupation that would provide a cash income for the purchase of flour and tea, woollen clothing, cloth tents, and other articles of civilization that were now becoming necessities. A few individuals in the Bristol Bay area obtained seasonal employment in the local salmon fisheries,

¹Cf. "past experiences in Alaska have demonstrated the danger resulting from the employment of a minority of teachers who seek employment in remote villages with the ulterior motives of proselytizing and devoting their attention to tasks which are in conflict with Territorial and Federal policies relating to the complete separation of church and state. Such practices have in the past disrupted village life completely and at the very least distracted the teacher from his primary and full-time task of teaching." (Ray, 1959, p. 240).

although the commercial companies which operated them relied almost entirely on unionized white workers recruited in the United States. A handful of other Eskimos became casual labourers at St. Michael, or on the Yukon River boats which made that port their base. The great majority, 75 per cent or more, turned to the trapping of foxes (and, in the Kuskokwim delta, muskrats), animals whose furs brought relatively high prices and appeared to be in limitless demand.

Introduction of reindeer

While the Eskimos themselves thus struggled in various ways to reform their economy, the man who had founded and was still operating the Alaskan school system, Dr. Sheldon Jackson, recommended the introduction of semi-domesticated reindeer from neighbouring Siberia to ward off the impending crisis. At first, Congress demurred and refused to vote him the necessary funds; but he appealed to the public, and with the money it contributed bought 16 deer in 1891 and 171 in 1892, which the captain of the revenue steamer transported across the Bering Sea to Teller in Port Clarence. The success of these first two shipments fired the imagination of the public, which forced Congress to finance further purchases until by 1902 the Bureau of Education had brought over 1,280 animals. Importation ceased in 1902, but within eight years of that date the 1,280 reindeer had increased to 27,325, grouped into numerous herds that ranged from Point Barrow on the arctic coast to Ugashik within forty miles of the Gulf of Alaska, and from the promontory of Wales facing Siberia to Tanana far up the Yukon River. If we average their worth at \$25 a head, which was the price at Barrow in 1914, then their capital value exceeded half a million dollars; but far more significant than their monetary value was their effect on the economy, for they brought security to an estimated 3,500 Eskimos directly, and to perhaps an equal number indirectly. Thus one man's vision swiftly translated into action gave northern Alaska a new food and clothing resource, one which dissipated the spectre of starvation that had been haunting the region for a decade. Ernest Gruening, Governor of Alaska from 1939 to 1952 and now one of the U.S. Senators from that state, did not exaggerate one iota when he wrote:

"The most important single contribution made to the natives—or at least to a part of them—in the first half-century of United States rule was the importation of reindeer, which, during the period when their natural food supply had been greatly impaired, saved thousands of Eskimos from death by starvation." (1954, p. 359).

PERIOD II: 1896-1939

The gold rushes

Neither in Alaska nor elsewhere can a reindeer industry be created overnight, and during the interval when one was developing the territory was swept by a gold fever. In 1896 a dozen paddle-wheeled steamers and launches plied up and down the Yukon River carrying hundreds of frenzied miners and their supplies. After the rush to the Yukon came the rush to Nome, and before the Nome rush had subsided white miners had spread all over the Alaska Peninsula, even into the unexplored Brooks Range of mountains that roughly parallels the arctic coast. Prospectors wandered into Eskimo settlements, hunted and trapped in hereditary Eskimo hunting-grounds, and engaged Eskimo men to transport their supplies by boat and dog-sled. The natives themselves rarely attempted to mine on their own account, and they generally kept aloof from the regular mining camps where they were mere hewers of wood and drawers of water; but they welcomed every opportunity for wage-employment on tasks with which they were already familiar, and on mechanical jobs, such as operating marine and stationary engines, for which they possessed a natural skill. The King Island natives became longshoremen at Nome during the summer months when the Seattle mail steamer and other vessels anchored off its beach; and Eskimos from different settlements along the coast manned the motorized schooners that began to frequent the Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean. As early as 1907 the natives of Unalakleet built and manned seven or eight small schooners, which they operated in Norton Sound and on the lower Yukon River. Less than twenty years later a Nunivak Island Eskimo successfully contracted with the United States government to carry the mail from Nome to St. Michael in his own diesel-engined vessel.

The gold rushes brought an influx of white settlers into northern Alaska, and before the outbreak of the First World War Nome, the mail-steamer terminus in the heart of the Eskimo area, had become a town of several thousand inhabitants. By that time, 1914, every Eskimo village of more than 100 persons contained a Bureau of Education school and a white school-teacher, sometimes also a white fur-trader and a white missionary. Eskimo children were acquiring a smattering of English in the schools, Eskimo men had developed a jargon, part Eskimo and part English, to communicate with white employers. Whereas prior to 1896 trade had consisted mainly of barter, and very little money had circulated in native communities, by 1904 Eskimo reindeer owners at Wales were paying cash for all the supplies they needed and ordering them direct from San Francisco to avoid middlemen's profits; and by 1914 natives in drift-wood cabins on the arctic coast east of Point Barrow were consulting Montgomery Ward's catalogues. The new white mining settlements, the flourishing salmon industry in Bristol Bay, the multiplying herds of semi-domesticated reindeer, and the decline in numbers of the whale and walrus—these had transformed the Eskimo economy. Gone were the fleets of commercial whalers that had scoured the Atlantic west of the African bulge during the mid-winter months, then in late spring had rounded the Horn and, turning northward, passed in July through Bering Strait into the Arctic Ocean. Steel-manufacturers and

fashion experts had promoted a change in women's "whalebone" corsets, which so depressed the value of baleen that by 1913 only one whaling vessel survived to enter the Arctic Ocean, where it was frozen in until the following summer. The Eskimos of Point Hope and Point Barrow, who in the previous century had gained most of their livelihood from whaling, set up one shore station in the spring of 1914, but failed to capture a single whale. Most of their hunters indeed had already abandoned whaling and were seeking a livelihood in another direction. Settlements farther south were undergoing a similar revolution; nearly everywhere the hunting of the big sea mammals, although still very important (as perhaps it always will be) was slipping back into second place.

Fur-trade economy

Eskimo economy had in fact changed from one of mere subsistence on the large game animals to a money economy built around the market value of certain furs, the principal being the fur of the white fox. The transition had taken place gradually, and, in the main, painlessly, for the trapping of fur-bearing animals is only a specialized form of hunting, and the natives had lived by hunting throughout their history. Nevertheless, the change carried in its train some far-reaching consequences, both social and economic. Eskimo hunting, whether of whale, walrus, seal, or caribou, had been largely a co-operative enterprise in which the whole community participated; but trapping was a solitary pursuit that could be shared at best by two families only. Moreover, it was not a year-round occupation, but strictly seasonal, being confined to that five-month period, between November and the beginning of April, when the furs of foxes, mink, and other far northern animals reach their prime; and during those months of little daylight the trapper could not hunt or fish for his food, but made each day the circuit of his trap-lines and subsisted on such meat and fish as he had been able to store during the summer and autumn, and on the flour, rice, tea, and canned goods he had purchased from some trader. So winter, previously a season of intense community life and of gay entertainment in the village dance-houses—except when a succession of blizzards that made seal-hunting impossible brought privation and hardship—became now for many Eskimo families a period of isolation and loneliness spent in tiny driftwood cabins a long day's journey from any neighbour. Native society began to lose its cohesiveness when its members lived apart during the greater part of the year and trapped for their individual families alone; and the proud hunters themselves, dependent on the white man's trading-post for food, steel traps, and other necessities of the new life, grew less resourceful and self-reliant. Even their health suffered from the now unbalanced diet, and from the psychological strain of close confinement without compensating relaxations.

Time has revealed other serious weaknesses in the adoption of the fur trade as a permanent economic base for the inhabitants of the American Arctic. Its stability rests on two factors, an uninterrupted abundance of white foxes and a remunerative market for their furs. Neither factor, it now appears, is constant. The fox population, like that of some other northern animals, runs in cycles; their number rises to a peak every four years and then decreases. The Eskimos have long been vaguely aware of this, but because they are comparatively unschooled in money economics, and possess the fatalism characteristic of other

hunting peoples, they have rarely displayed any inclination to provide for the lean seasons by putting aside part of whatever income they have earned in seasons of plenty. Furthermore, both the demand for furs and their prices fluctuate greatly on international markets, because they are a luxury product which reacts to every favourable and unfavourable breeze from two distinct worlds, the world of business and the world of fashion, and the latter world especially is wholly unpredictable. At the beginning of the 20th century, when fur farming was still unborn, white-fox furs brought a relatively high price in comparison with the goods for which they could be bartered at any trading-post. Even as late as 1914, on the eve of the First World War, the Eskimos at Kotzebue and Barrow, in far northern Alaska, received on the average \$15 for every white-fox pelt, and paid only the Seattle price, \$1.00 or \$1.30, for a 50-lb. sack of flour which, then as now, was the main item in the trapper's diet. But during the war the values of all pelts slumped, whereas staple goods became dearer; and although white-fox pelts subsequently rose again in value, there came a period, just after the Second World War, when muffs and collars made from them suddenly went out of fashion, and the pelt dropped in value from around \$30 to \$3.00. Today (May 1960) a good white-fox pelt sells at Kotzebue and neighbouring settlements for about \$35, and a 50-lb. sack of flour costs \$9.00 or \$9.50: but when prices move so erratically, when fur farms are still expanding and synthetic furs are appearing on the market, we can no longer doubt that to rest the economy and welfare of a whole people on the trapping of the wild fur-bearing animals alone is not merely hazardous but criminal.

In 1900, however, the weaknesses of the fur-trappers' way of life had not fully revealed themselves, and the Alaskan Eskimos, relieved of the incubus of starvation, were beginning to prosper from their newly introduced reindeer and from the remunerative prices they were receiving for their fox-pelts. Some of these pelts they sold to the captains of the whaling vessels, who frequently combined whale-hunting with trade; but when whaling declined in the first decade of the century the white traders who had settled, temporarily or permanently, in the larger Eskimo communities encountered few or no competitors. Profits remained consistently high and the risks steadily lessened as the coast became better known, communications improved, and the natives enmeshed themselves more and more tightly in the network of monetary trade. Probably, in time, some giant commercial company or companies in the United States would have squeezed out, or bought out, the local traders and established a monopolistic control over the north Alaskan fur trade similar to the control exercised by two or three large corporations over the salmon fisheries farther south; but Washington forestalled any such development by opening up for the natives, through its mail and educational services, an official marketing channel that by-passed the local middlemen entirely.

In this field too, as in the introduction of the reindeer, the most active agent was the Office of the General Agent of Education in Alaska. Wherever it set up a native school it established also a post office; and it encouraged the Eskimos to mail out their pelts, packed to weigh less than 50 lb., the maximum weight acceptable by parcel post in the United States. At first they were addressed to a reliable sales agency in Seattle; later, to the Seattle office of the Bureau of Education, which acted without commission as the Eskimos' agent, sold their pelts and handicrafts, and either forwarded them, or banked to their credit,

the proceeds, after settling any debts they might have incurred with Seattle merchants. The Bureau even went a step farther: it became their buying and shipping agent, sending them building materials, furniture, European-style clothing, and other goods on the vessel that transported and supplied its teachers—a service that was the more valuable, because the newly invented aircraft had not yet tested their wings, and many settlements along the arctic coast rarely or never saw the masts of any commercial vessel.

It may appear strange that the United States, a country more aggressively devoted to free enterprise than any other, should have consciously adopted in the first decade of the twentieth century a measure so redolent of socialist theory. However, it was not doctrinal principles that stirred Washington officials to action, but righteous indignation at the exploitation of the Eskimos by a few unscrupulous traders, and a determination to check the malpractices of these individuals by clipping their wings. We sense this attitude in the annual report of the Director of the Bureau of Education in Alaska for the year 1910–11:

“One of the problems of the work in northern Alaska has been to provide a market for the furs and ivory obtained by the Eskimos on the shores of Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean. Formerly, on account of the remoteness from civilization of these regions, it was possible for the natives to dispose of their wares to local traders only, with the result that the natives received low prices and were constantly in debt to the local traders. With the extension of the mail service, many natives now send by mail packages of fox, lynx and other valuable furs to reliable sales agencies in the Puget Sound region, where they are sold at auction, in accordance with the rules governing such sales. As the result natives who formerly received 50 cents for a foxskin may now realize as much as \$8.50 for a foxskin of the same grade. The captain of the vessel which for the past five years has delivered the annual supplies to teachers and missionaries in the Arctic has also carried many tons of food supplies and thousands of feet of lumber which he sells to the Eskimos at reasonable prices and receives their orders for goods to be delivered the following summer. Last summer the natives of Point Barrow and its vicinity alone sent out orders for approximately \$10,000 worth of goods. The teachers of the United States public schools cooperate in these movements to better conditions among the Eskimos. This policy is revolutionizing the Eskimo villages; sanitary houses built of good lumber are replacing filthy huts of driftwood and sod, and the Eskimos are gradually achieving economic independence.” (U.S. Bur. Ed. 1912, pp. 14–15).

The official who wrote these lines could not predict the social and economic consequences of his policy, nor foresee that before many years had passed it would be branded in some quarters (not necessarily connected with ‘big business’) as rank paternalism or colonialism and an improper restriction of free enterprise. He saw one of the evils of the fur-trade economy, recognized the primitiveness of Eskimo living conditions, and optimistically believed that his bureau and teaching staff could quickly revolutionize the native settlements and inaugurate the millennium. But the wheels of change often turn more slowly than men wish. Filthy huts of driftwood and sod still dot the shores of arctic Alaska, and their Eskimo occupants are still awaiting the day when they will achieve economic independence.

Federal and territorial responsibilities

Nevertheless, it was with high hopes that in the 1900's the Alaska Division of the Bureau of Education added to the reindeer enterprise it had introduced in the previous decade a second economic activity designed to promote

Eskimo welfare, the marketing of native furs and handicrafts. Ever since its establishment in 1884 it had represented almost the only evidence that Washington even remembered its Indian and Eskimo wards in distant Alaska. True, the gold rushes between 1896 and the end of the century, and the troublesome dispute with Canada in 1903 over the international boundary, had turned the eyes of Congress intermittently northward; and in 1912 Washington sanctioned the creation of a territorial legislature to which Indians and Eskimos would be eligible for election. But so great were the restrictions Washington imposed on the taxation powers of this legislature, and on its control of Alaska's natural resources, that for many years the young parliament confined its deliberations to the white inhabitants of the territory, and to those natives and half-breeds who had adopted the life of the whites. It was to this section alone that it applied its first session's legislation, which made education compulsory and set up a territorial health service. The education and health of the Eskimos, in large measure also their economic welfare, it reluctantly left, for a period purposely undefined, on the shoulders of the federal government, or, more precisely, on the shoulders of the Alaskan Bureau of Education, which had carried those burdens from the beginning.

It was only two years after this first session of the territorial legislature that the First World War broke out and proceeded to run its course. A few white trappers had been settling for one or more winters at isolated places along the coast; and now at rare intervals some white prospector in search of strategic minerals drifted through an Eskimo village. But the villages themselves dreamed away the war years in undisturbed peace until the influenza epidemic of 1918 arrived and decimated them; and the Bureau of Education maintained its program of work without interruption down to 1930, when Washington—which had modified its earlier policy and was now willing to relieve Congress and the federal departments of every Alaskan problem which the territory itself seemed able to handle—proceeded very quietly to abolish it. It forced the Bureau, first, to hand over its reindeer service to the office of the Governor of Alaska (only to have the sadly ailing industry tossed back on to its hands seven years later); and in 1931 it transferred all the Bureau's other functions—native education, health, and welfare—to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, an older and larger branch of the Department of the Interior. It might have transferred these three functions also to the territorial government, which already controlled the education and health of white children, if the territory's finances had seemed equal to the task;¹ but when six years later the territorial government itself offered to share the functions, Washington's Commissioner of Indian Affairs refused to negotiate, because his department had once more changed its policy.

For more than half a century, then, the Bureau of Education and its successor, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, held in their hands the reins of Eskimo destiny. We may liken them during those years to a radio station with three transmitters. The largest transmitter beamed education to the Eskimos: it maintained and staffed the primary schools and provided high-school and vocational training. The second transmitter beamed health: it supplied physicians, nurses, and drugs to cope with sickness in the villages, and a few hospitals

¹The Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934 made provision for such a transfer to the territorial government with Congress still appropriating funds.

to treat the most serious cases. The third, and, unhappily, the weakest transmitter beamed economic welfare—the weakest, because when the age-old bases of a people's economy have been shattered, administrators must seek entirely new foundations on which to rebuild; and these are not easy to find in the Arctic, where the economic resources are few and the costs of developing them, as a rule, extremely high.

Let us follow first the educational beam.

Eskimo education

The system of education which Sheldon Jackson introduced in 1884 preserved the missionary fervour of its founder right down to 1908, the year of his retirement.¹ Jackson firmly believed that only fluency in both speaking and writing the English language would fit the natives "for the social and industrial life of the white population of the United States and promote their not-too-distant assimilation"—the goal which Congress had set before its Alaskan administration. But he also believed that a knowledge of English would immensely facilitate the instruction of the Eskimos in Christian doctrine and their conversion to a Christian way of life; and it was with this aim, no less than to promote their assimilation, that he made English the cardinal subject in the school curriculum and supported it with a little elementary arithmetic and some slight notion of geography. He carried the same missionary impulse into the reindeer enterprise, which was far more to him than a straightforward economic project designed solely to satisfy the material needs of the Eskimos for food and clothing. Rather it was a powerful instrument for creating a new civilization among them, a civilization which would loosen the shackles of their old communalistic culture, foster the growth of private ownership of property, and thereby develop those traditional traits of America's great pioneers, individual initiative, individual responsibility, and in a few superior natives the spirit of leadership.

"The administration of the reindeer service as an integral part of the education system must not be overlooked. The district superintendents and assistant district superintendents [of education], who are skilled reindeer men, are the superintendents of the reindeer service; the teacher at each government station is the local superintendent of the reindeer herd; traveling teachers are employed to teach in their reindeer camps; the apprentices attend also when practicable the school at the station. The apprentices are instructed in the keeping of accounts, in the methods of marketing reindeer . . .

"The superintendents and teachers are in reality, with the assistance of the missionaries at mission stations, molding the future development of the native villages and the race by their guidance in all phases of life, in the schoolroom, industrial room, kitchen, bathroom, home, and herd." (U.S. Bur. Ed. 1910, p. 1,326; also cf. Ray, 1959, p. 28f.).

Many of the first generation of school-teachers caught the missionary fervour of the pioneering Jackson. One might indeed have expected this with teachers officially ordained by some religious denomination; but others who were not associated with any denominational activities displayed the same resolute spirit and dedication to human uplift. These teachers were not dismayed by the hardships, the isolation, and the low salaries of those early days.

¹"While the educational policy was officially approved in Washington, because of the great distances and slow communications virtually all of the educational decisions, in terms of policy as well as of administration, were made by Sheldon Jackson". (Ray, 1959, p. 25 footnote).

They looked on their work as a challenge; and instead of resigning, or asking for extended holidays, after the first or second year, they stuck to their posts as long as their health lasted, or until personal or other obligations called them away. Of course, Jackson could not fill his staff completely with men and women of this calibre, but he found enough of them to leaven the school service, and to reduce to measurable proportions that annual turnover of teachers which has plagued all succeeding administrations.

Jackson's funds were so small that he experienced great difficulty in providing even the most elementary education for natives so primitive and so widely scattered. Nevertheless he never lost sight of the need for higher training than was possible in the villages if ever he was to raise up outstanding leaders to become the Solons of their communities; and as early as 1890 he began to send promising boys and girls to Carlisle and other schools in the United States, where they could receive further instruction in the usual school subjects, and also some vocational training. But vocational training has very little value unless the trainee can find opportunities to apply it; and too many of the skills taught in these United States schools, for example, plumbing, could not be practised in Eskimo villages that derived their water supply from ponds and streams in summer, and from blocks of ice and holes through the ice in winter. Consequently many student 'exiles' never returned to their villages; and many who did return became malcontents instead of leaders, because they were unable to readjust themselves to their home environments. Virtually the only opening available to them there was teaching; and while some did adopt this profession, their number was small and their influence negligible. There was an Eskimo assistant-teacher at Unalakleet in 1903, and another at Wales; but I cannot find that any native ever rose to a senior school position down to at least the Second World War.¹

It was doubtless the overwhelming preponderance of semi-civilized natives in the population of Alaska before and even after the gold rushes that favoured so pronounced a missionary slant in the early educational system, and made so many United States men and women consider teaching in that region, especially in its northern Eskimo area, a calling rather than a profession. Until the first decade of the twentieth century, the system embraced both white and native children: one of its regulations, indeed, explicitly stated that all public schools should be open to all children without reference to race. However, as Governor Gruening remarked later,

"Educational facilities always lagged far behind need. Twenty years after the federal government had assumed that responsibility at least three-quarters of the native children were without schooling. One hundred and seventy-seven native villages with a school population of four thousand were unprovided with school facilities in 1905. Yet the congressional appropriation of only \$50,000 not only made it impossible to open the needed new schools, but compelled the closing of some already established. Adult education—particularly needed in the circumstances—was undreamt of and the acquisition of the English language by the native population thereby postponed." (1954, p. 361).

It is not surprising, therefore, that even before Jackson's retirement the growing white population became dissatisfied with the inferior education he was providing for its children, and demanded both separate schools and a voice

¹In 1958 there were 23 Eskimos teaching among their own people. Five were Principal Teachers; most of the others Instructional Aids in charge of newly established schools (Tiffany, 1958, p. 13).

in their control. Congress responded in 1900 by sanctioning the incorporation of towns in which the schools would be under local control and supported by 50 per cent of the licence money collected within their corporate limits. And in 1905 it followed up this legislation by passing the Nelson Act, which placed under the Governor of Alaska the management of all schools for white children, and for children of mixed blood who were leading a civilized life, outside the incorporated towns, but left the education of native children still under the control of Washington, to be financed as before by Congress appropriations.

Since 1905, therefore, Alaska has been operating three school systems:

1. Missionary schools, most of them boarding-schools filled largely with orphan children.
2. Federal schools for Eskimos and Indians, administered until 1931 by the Bureau of Education, a branch of the Department of the Interior, and after that date by the Alaska Native Service of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, another branch of the Department of the Interior.
3. Schools for white children and "children of mixed blood who lead a civilized life". In the towns they were administered at first by appointed committees, and outside the towns by the office of the Governor of Alaska; but when Alaska received the status of a territory all these schools came under the Territorial (today the State) Department of Education.

If we overlook the missionary schools, which have never attained great importance¹, we are left with two educational systems rather sharply distinguished along racial lines. This distinction was not confined to education; it extended beyond that sphere to the social services: for although legally the territorial government was as responsible for these as the federal government, it was the latter that by tacit agreement undertook to provide them for the natives². In many communities with mixed populations, therefore, particularly the larger ones, there arose duplicate educational and social service systems, one for natives administered by Washington, the other for whites administered by the territory. Washington's outlook, however, underwent a distinct change during the Second World War, and after that struggle ended it gladly transferred some of its Alaskan activities to the territorial administration. Its schools in southeastern and southern central Alaska then became territorial (now state) schools; and the approximately eighty schools it still operates in northern Alaska will probably change hands also in the not distant future. Nevertheless, as long as the separate school systems flourished, they played no small part in maintaining the racial segregation of Eskimos from whites that took root during the gold rushes, and revealed itself openly in hotel, motion-picture theatres, and elsewhere down to 1944, when the territorial government passed three laws forbidding racial discrimination in the administration of mothers' pensions, in the treatment of juvenile offences, and in admission to hotels and other public places.

¹Private and denominational schools enrolled only 536 Indian and Eskimo pupils in 1956-7 (Ray, 1959, p. 6).

²Ray states that "During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the Territorial government took the position that the welfare of the Alaskan natives was primarily a Federal, rather than a Territorial, responsibility. The basic reasons for this attitude were the financial inability of the Territory to make adequate provisions for both the native and the white population as well as the traditional responsibility of the Federal government toward Indian welfare in the United States." (1959, p. 42).

Educational discrimination showed itself as early as 1902, when the school boards of two newly incorporated towns, Juneau and Ketchikan, refused to accept children of Indian or Eskimo descent, and the school board of a third incorporated town, Nome, deliberately neglected to provide schooling for Eskimo children. So numerous, however, were the communities that contained mixed populations that some compromise was inevitable if many children of both races were not to be debarred from schooling altogether. Alaskan authorities then quickly found a bridge between the two systems, in that clause of the Nelson Act which expressly opened the doors of white schools to "children of mixed blood who lead a civilized life"; for the term "civilized life" is so vague that it can carry the widest interpretations. In the beginning the children of mixed blood who attended federal or 'native' schools probably outnumbered those who attended territorial schools; but as the territorial government became more entrenched, and its finances more ordered, it began to accept in its schools not only mixed-bloods but pure-bloods, especially in villages where the native element was too small to warrant the establishment of a federal school. With the passage of years, therefore, the racial distinction between the two systems gradually faded; and whereas in 1930 the majority of Eskimo and Indian children were being educated by the federal Bureau of Education, by 1956 the pendulum had swung over and the majority of native children were attending schools administered by the Territorial Department of Education.

But let us return to 1905. In that year the federal Bureau of Education sloughed off its responsibility for the education of white children and devoted all its money and energy to what was officially described as educating the native population and training it for citizenship. It appointed district superintendents to improve the liaison between Washington and the teachers in arctic Alaska, and it modified the outlook and policies that had been imposed by the indefatigable Jackson, who had dictated nearly every major decision from the day of his appointment in 1884 to his retirement in 1908. His departure in that year abruptly ended the 'missionary' era of the Bureau's activities. Thenceforth the new administrators, not convinced that the Eskimos would rapidly abandon their old culture and assimilate to the whites, refused to focus the federal government's strongest efforts on the training of a cadre of native leaders to guide their people toward that goal. Instead, they assumed (and hoped) that the Eskimo population and its villages would remain relatively stable; and they placed in the forefront of their program two new goals—the fostering of democratic forms of government in native communities and the raising of the standard of living. Since these goals inevitably pivoted on the work of the school-teachers, they enlarged the latter's duties to include those of welfare officers and community planners.

"The village teacher usually has responsibility not only for all phases of elementary school teaching but also for community welfare and social work, including medical and dental examination and prescription, adult classes in citizenship and domestic arts, supervision of village government and law, economic activities such as village co-operative stores or reindeer herds, enforcement of quarantine, distribution of destitution goods, and the construction and repair of school property. Despite these varied duties, the teacher must spend the required working days of a five-day week throughout the school year in the classroom." (Anderson and Eells, 1935, p. 239).

The democratization of village governments proceeded very slowly, and varied in character from place to place according to the predilections of the school-teachers. Some villages set up a mayor and councillors to conduct their affairs; others turned over this task to the local committee which supervised the management of the native reindeer herds in the vicinity. Whatever the shape democracy assumed, the role it played in village life was largely nominal. Down to 1931 at least, the new village authorities remained hardly more than facades behind which the communities, especially those in the more isolated regions, carried on their activities exactly as before, hardly affected by the democratic notions enamelled on their surfaces by the governing whites.

In 1934, after the Bureau of Indian Affairs had inherited the Alaskan mantle of the Bureau of Education, Congress passed the Wheeler-Howard or Indian Reorganization Act, which at first applied only to the United States, but was extended two years later to Alaska. It marked the opening step in a very broad program that aimed at giving the native peoples of both regions a "New Deal"; but the act itself went only a short way towards that goal. It authorized the Secretary of the Interior to enlarge the existing land reservations of the natives and to create new ones; it prohibited ownership of land in severalty on all reservations; on the economic side it provided a revolving fund from which the government could offer loans to native corporations for the establishment of new enterprises, and to individual natives for vocational training; and it gave them permission to draw up constitutions and by-laws for their various communities, ratify them by a majority vote, and submit them for approval to the Secretary of the Interior. This 'permission' carried in effect the force of an order, at least in northern Alaska, since it was the Secretary of the Interior who provided the schools, medical attention, and other services and he could deny them to any village that incurred his displeasure. I have found no statement giving the number of Eskimo communities which submitted constitutions and by-laws to Washington before the Second World War brought all or most of their villages under military control; but by 1949 "32 Eskimo villages had organized under the Indian Reorganization Act, had their constitutions and officers, and in most cases were really functioning as civil bodies." (Lantis, 1952a, p. 40).

The changes in outlook which inspired these attempted reorganizations of village government brought also some modifications in the educational field. In the first decade of the twentieth century the Bureau of Education broadened the school curriculum to provide more time for social studies and for hygiene; but it retained the pre-eminence of English teaching because a knowledge of that language facilitated communication with the white population and helped the natives to obtain wage-employment. In the revised curriculum it laid much greater emphasis on manual training, particularly the use of carpentry tools, the making of fur clothing and shoes, and the working of the sewing machine, all of them skills that were extremely useful in village life.

To achieve its second objective, the raising of the standard of living in Eskimo villages, the Bureau of Education relied not on its school-teachers alone, but on their graduating pupils; for although it no longer subscribed to Sheldon Jackson's opinion that "creaming off" the brighter school-children and training them for leadership would rapidly "fit the Eskimos for the social and industrial life of the United States", it did not overlook the value of higher education,

but continued his policy of sending selected children outside to various industrial or vocational training-schools. Inevitably it too was troubled by the non-return of many students and the maladjustment of those who did return; and in 1926, after Congress had multiplied its funds several-fold over those of Jackson's day, it tried to eliminate the former problem, and ease the latter, by training the children in Alaska itself, where the environment would be more familiar to them. For this purpose it converted into vocational boarding-schools three orphanages which it had established after the influenza epidemic of 1918, one at Eklutna near Anchorage, one at Kanakanak in Bristol Bay, and the third at White Mountain, in the Seward Peninsula. It limited admission to boys and girls who had completed the fourth grade in the village elementary schools, were recommended by their teachers, and approved by the district superintendent; and it placed on the curriculum, besides the usual school subjects, courses in such industries as carpentry, furniture-making, boat-building, house-building, sled construction, the operation and repair of gas-engines, marine engineering, navigation, skin-tanning, ivory-carving, and basket-weaving—to which it added within three years stenography, typewriting, clerical work, and business practice. All these vocational subjects may have proved useful in village life, the last four in connection with the cooperative stores that the Bureau was promoting in many places; but the general courses, in the judgment of the Stanford University investigator, H. D. Anderson, were an inept patchwork of various American systems, taught from American textbooks quite unsuited to an Eskimo environment. To make matters worse, these vocational schools, particularly the one at Eklutna, were forced to accept Eskimo juvenile delinquents committed to them by the courts, and this not only lowered their entrance standards, already prejudiced by the admission of children under ten years, but gave them an unsavoury reputation. (Anderson and Eells, 1935, pp. 396f.).

Much smaller than the Bureau of Education's vocational schools on the mainland, but less controversial and perhaps on the whole more successful, was its nautical school on the U.S.S. *Boxer*, a wooden vessel built as a cadet training ship for the navy, but transferred in 1920 to the Department of the Interior, which needed its own transport to supply school outposts not served by any private vessel. During the summer months the *Boxer* carried teachers, doctors, and nurses of the Bureau of Education, with many tons of equipment and supplies, to a score or more settlements along the Alaskan coast as far north as Point Barrow; and from 1923 onward, after it had accomplished this mission and was heading south again to escape the freeze-up, it brought with it to the panhandle half a dozen teen-aged Eskimo boys, who lived on board all winter with the ship's officers and received instructions in

"navigation, with special training covering the operation and care of Diesel engines, dynamos, and marine machinery; radio telegraphy, or wireless, including practice work in installation of wireless receiving and sending sets; cooking, with instructions and practice in the preparation of a proper marine menu; general elementary subjects, with special emphasis in speaking and writing English; history, including civil governments; personal hygiene, and physical training; lectures on such virtues as cleanliness, morality, courage, dependability, and politeness." (U.S. Bur. Ed. 1923-24, pp. 29-30).

Their schooling ended in the spring, when they helped to navigate the *Boxer* down to Seattle, load it, and about May sail it north again on its summer

cruise. Thus they received both practical and theoretical training in what might have been very useful professions. Unfortunately that training was much too short for them to graduate professionally, or to qualify for any position higher than that of able seamen, although many of them became proficient enough to operate the engines of motor schooners, work the wireless (when there was one), and navigate safely the coastal waters of arctic America.

It was among the graduates of its vocational schools that the Bureau of Education hoped to find the native leaders who, with the school-teachers, would gradually improve the conditions of village life and raise the Eskimos' living standard. Largely for that reason it never set up any employment office to feed them into the occupations and service of the white population. The ex-students themselves, educated separately from white children and speaking usually quite imperfect English, found little opportunity to acquire white friends who could help them to enter the fields of commerce and industry that opened up after the gold rushes. Chinese immigrants experienced no difficulty in obtaining employment in the towns and mining camps, or in setting up small businesses of their own; and many Eskimos resembled Chinese so closely that they could be distinguished only with difficulty. But the orientals, whether the white Alaskans realized it or not, were heirs to an ancient and glorious civilization which had bequeathed them the knowledge and the resolution to make their way in any environment from the equator to the Arctic, whereas the Eskimos possessed no history, no knowledge of any environment except their own Arctic, and no experience on which to draw for guidance and courage in a strangely competitive and rather unfriendly world. So nearly all vocational-school students returned to the shelter of their home villages, where the Bureau expected them to fulfil the rather narrow purpose for which it had established the schools:

"As conceived, the purpose of these schools is to offer native boys and girls specialized instruction of an industrial nature such as the ordinary day school is not equipped for at the present, and to give training, encouragement, and help to exceptional young people that they may better cope with the peculiar conditions under which they live; and they in turn to render service to their own people by pointing out better ways to utilize the natural resources, to build better homes and communities, and to live fuller, richer, and happier lives." (Anderson and Eells, 1935, p. 393).

The Bureau of Education (and its successor the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which ran an employment service for Indians in the United States) must have known that its better-trained students would find comparatively little opening in their villages for the skills they had acquired in the vocational schools. Why then did it not urge and help the brightest of them to break out of their isolation, seek wage-employment with the white population, adopt its mode of life and higher economic standard, and merge with it quietly and speedily, thereby arriving at that "not-too-distant assimilation" which as far back as the 1880's Congress had ordered the Bureau to promote?

There appear to have been several reasons. In the first place, we must remember that northern Alaska was still a frontier region, where the struggle to earn a livelihood was hard and the weaker and less efficient individual was ruthlessly pushed to the wall. The Eskimos could hold their own in fields with which they were familiar—hunting and travelling on land and water, herding reindeer, and various labouring jobs such as longshoring; but in the commercial world for which their old culture had not prepared them they

could only drift. The banker at Nome or Unalakleet who needed a new clerk, and the merchant in Bethel who required a salesman or a book-keeper, might himself feel no prejudice against the young and inexperienced Eskimo who offered his services, but he naturally preferred an unemployed fellow-American, or at least a white man, who was more conversant with the English language than the Eskimo youth, and sufficiently familiar with business practices to carry on unaided should his employer be absent from any cause. Moreover, some of his customers in northern Alaska did feel, and feel today, a definite prejudice against Eskimos, a prejudice comparable to that harboured in 1928 by the (then) 300 white residents of Hazelton, in northern British Columbia, against their 400 Indian neighbours, whom they compelled to walk behind them, never alongside, on the village streets, and to sit on the opposite side of the local church during Sunday morning services. Racial prejudices everywhere are exceedingly hard to combat; and it was much easier for the Bureau of Education (and, later, the Bureau of Indian Affairs) to send Eskimo students back to their home communities, where their training and knowledge might benefit their fellow-villagers and bring the assimilation of their children and grandchildren one step nearer.

These communities, which to so many Washington officials, and to casual observers in Alaska itself, seemed to be quietly slumbering through the early decades of the twentieth century, were undergoing beneath their surfaces a slow ferment. The old order had changed. Trapping, reindeer herding, and wage-employment by whites were building up new economic foundations. The down-grading by traders, missionaries, and school-teachers of the time-honoured authority of the wise old hunters who had directed the activities of the villages in pre-European times was creating totally new social conditions; and the partial replacement of the old shamanistic religion, with its belief in magic and witchcraft, by an ill-understood Christianity in which prayers and hymns supplanted the solemn incantations handed down from antiquity, produced psychological stresses and strains that at times threatened to tear away the cohesive bonds that held the communities together. Traders, missionaries, and school-teachers all contributed to this ferment, but most of all, perhaps, the boys and girls who returned from the vocational boarding-schools. The Bureau of Education may have been right in believing that its ex-students would spear-head changes in the villages; but the historian of a generation later feels less certain that these young people, who had yet to acquire the experience and sagacity of the old hunters, either guided, or were capable of guiding, their people in the best direction.

There was another reason why the Bureau of Education did not push its vocational-school students into the white employment market, a reason at which I hinted earlier, but must mention again here because it coloured all the Bureau's thinking and planning down to its abolition in 1931. It was the tacit assumption that, until that far-distant day when Eskimos and white men would have merged, painlessly and imperceptibly, conditions in north Alaska would remain relatively stationary; that no internal or external upheavals would disrupt the slowly changing social and economic pattern of native life; that no increase in their numbers would outstrip their regular food supply from reindeer, fish, and marine animals; but that they would quietly remain in the villages they had inhabited since the beginning of the century, content to occupy an inferior

status on the fringes of the white settlements and to gather the crumbs of luxury that fell from the master-race's table; all this, provided that the government for its part took care of their health, taught their children to speak and write simple English, and protected them from commercial exploitation.

Of course, the Bureau of Education could not foresee that another world war would soon throw into confusion the entire continent. It cannot be justly criticized on that score. But it failed entirely to take into account that the Eskimos might one day increase beyond the capacity of their village resources to provide not their bare sustenance alone, but the rising standard of living which the Bureau itself was striving to create; and that this would force some of the villagers to move away, and others to become charges on the government. It failed to reflect, too, that by condemning the Eskimos to semi-quarantine, by deliberately segregating their children from white children and giving them an inferior education and training, it was negating Washington's declared policy of "fitting them for the social and industrial life of the white population". Finally, it resolutely refused to face the probability that if it could persuade or force the white population to swallow its racial prejudice, accept Eskimo children on an equal footing with its own, educate them to the same level, and employ them on the same tasks, these children would display as much intelligence and energy as Chinese and Japanese children in Hawaii, and contribute as effectively to the development of Alaska as white immigrants from the United States.

We can judge from a few figures the expansion of the Bureau of Education for Alaska during the almost fifty years of its existence. Its staff grew from one man in 1884, its founder Sheldon Jackson, to 282 in 1929, just two years before its abolition. Of this number 3 were stationed in Washington to keep in close contact with the office of the Secretary of the Interior; 6 (including the Bureau's director) in Seattle, where they maintained a purchasing and disbursing office and a teacher's recruiting agency; and all the rest—6 superintendents, 181 teachers, 9 physicians, 29 nurses, 3 reindeer-service officers, 19 persons on the U.S.S. *Boxer* and the Yukon medical boat, and 26 cooks, janitors and orderlies—in Alaska. The number of schools they were operating had increased from 35 in 1890, half of which were subsidized missionary schools, to 93 in 1929; and the number of children enrolled in the schools had tripled to 3,660. Another 1,000 Eskimo children, probably, were being educated in territorial schools; but there were still others, mostly in very small villages, for whom neither the federal bureau nor the territorial government was providing any education. Each year, however, Congress was opening its money-bags more widely, and the widow's mite of \$25,000 that it had allocated to the Bureau in 1884 had swollen by 1918 to \$267,500 (\$200,000 for education, \$62,500 for the Bureau's medical work and \$5,000 for its reindeer service); and by 1931 it totalled over a million (education \$824,000, medical work \$319,000, and reindeer service \$26,000).

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, which took over the functions of the Bureau of Education and absorbed the latter's field staff into what it called its Alaska Native Service (A.N.S., an organization which still exists), kept the school-schedules and text-books of its predecessor, faithfully pursued for two years the same policies and aims, replaced teachers as before from the civil service registers of the United States, and opened more schools yearly as the appropriations of Congress became more generous. But it showed itself even less

inclined than the Bureau of Education to wean the younger Eskimos away from their villages, because with the appointments in 1933 of a new Secretary of the interior, Harold Ickes, and a new Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John Collier, its objectives in Eskimo (and Indian) education had undergone a complete change.

The founder of Alaskan education, Sheldon Jackson, had laboured for the speedy assimilation of the natives: he had tried to link up their economies with the white man's, to subordinate their languages to English, to efface their primitive animistic religions with Christianity, and to change the furniture of their minds, their folkways, to match the new European-style clothing that covered their bodies. His successors in the Bureau of Education had pursued the same aims, although at a more leisurely pace. But Ickes and Collier, combining unconsciously old Mediterranean visions of a Golden Age with Fenimore Cooper's picture of the 'noble Indian', dreamed of giving a "New Deal" to the earliest inhabitants of the United States and Alaska. They resolved to revive the waning morale of the natives, to encourage their handicrafts, preserve and stimulate the use of their languages, revive their legends and traditions, resuscitate such of their old folkways as did not conflict with the American way of life, and restore—so far as it was still possible—their economic and political independence by 'handing back' to them large tracts of territory on which they could set up local governments of their own and conduct their own internal affairs. With this aim the Department of the Interior sponsored the Wheeler-Howard Act already mentioned; financed anthropologists to collect and publish the ancient legends; issued a new dictionary of the language of the rapidly vanishing Aleuts—but failed to improve either their education or their economy; set up an Arts and Crafts Board to promote the sale of Indian and Eskimo handicrafts; and attempted to establish large reservations in both south and north Alaska whose natives, unlike the Indians of the United States, had never signed any treaties with the United States government nor been allocated definite reserves. It justified this last act on the legally questionable ground that aboriginal rights antedated even possessory rights; that any lands over which Indians or Eskimos in the past might have hunted, and waters in which their ancestors had fished, were Indian lands and waters by occupancy and use; and that although the United States had made no treaty with Alaskan natives, the Organic Act of 1884 had expressly decreed that they were not to be disturbed in the possession of any lands actually in their use and occupation or then claimed by them. The local Eskimos themselves, however, refused to ratify as required by law the department's proposal to establish two reservations in northern Alaska, one of 480,000 acres near Barrow and the other of 1,472,000 acres around Shungnak, on the Kobuk River; and in 1952 Judge Folta virtually quashed any further attempt to annex large tracts of public or private land for native reservations by ruling in a definite test case that the Department of the Interior had misinterpreted the Organic Act and exceeded its legal powers. By that date, in any case, the era of a "New Deal for the Indians" had ended. Collier in 1945, and Ickes in 1946, had passed into history as federal administrators; and Washington did not appeal Judge Folta's ruling because Congress itself had just taken a long look at its Indians and Eskimos and declared that their wardship should end as speedily as possible, since their segregation or separation from other citizens of the United States was "not acceptable to our American way of life". With

this declaration it flatly rejected the policies of its Department of the Interior during the preceding sixteen years, and concurred in the opinion Judge Folta annexed to his judicial decision:

"Whatever may be said of reservations in the unsettled regions of Alaska, they are viewed as indefensible in southeastern Alaska, and generally condemned by whites and Indians alike as racial segregation and discrimination in their worst form." (Gruening, 1954, p. 380).

In retrospect we can now see that the "New Deal" began as an honest revolt against the injustices that the United States Indians had received at the hands of the invading Europeans, and an attempt to right their wrongs by turning the clock back. But it is never possible to turn the clock back. Nature changes ceaselessly, and man himself marches steadily and irrevocably on. The New Dealers were trying to step a second time into a river that had already flowed past them. They did not realize that it was totally impossible to restore the old Indian (or Eskimo) way of life, for it was rooted in an environment that had passed away, and the old customs, old folkways, even the languages were certain to disappear unless they could readapt themselves and put out new roots in the world of today. Its economic foundations, too, had weakened and in some places collapsed; the buffalo had vanished from the plains; in the Arctic the whales, walrus, and caribou had become less numerous. Most important of all, the natives themselves had changed. They were no longer stone-age peoples whose horizons did not extend beyond the few tiny communities around them and whose needs were so simple that they could supply them by their own efforts. Their needs had grown to include schools and hospitals, motor transport, radio, and other things which they could obtain only from the outside world; and their horizons had expanded to make them conscious members of a great agricultural, industrial, and commercial nation whose interests spanned the globe. To keep them isolated on reserves, however large, and urge them to revive the customs they had outgrown and found no longer useful, was to condemn them to slow extinction. For their numbers are small, and their communities widely scattered; and man, like other animals, needs the cohesion and support of a sizable population if he is to survive in any other way than as a trumpeter swan in a carefully guarded park or a muskox in a public zoo.

The "New Deal" lasted only a few years, but before it faded it succeeded in delaying any consolidation of Eskimo education in Alaska, any unification of its two school systems, the one federal and the other territorial. Prior to the days of Ickes and Collier Washington had looked on cheerfully as the Territorial Department of Education increased the number of its schools and mingled more and more native children with its white pupils; and in 1934 Congress passed the Johnson-O'Malley act which authorized the Secretary of the Interior to enter into contracts with any state, territory, or political subdivision thereof "for the education, medical attention, agricultural assistance, and social welfare, including relief of distress, of Indians in such State or Territory". But when the territorial government of Alaska took cognizance of this law three years later, and proposed to Washington that all Alaska's schools should be operated jointly by the two governments as a single system, Collier refused to consider the proposal because it would have menaced his "New Deal"; and it was not until 1950 that the subject of their union came to the forefront again.

In the territorial mixed schools, teachers were neither village administrators nor welfare officers, so that their load was considerably lighter than that of

teachers in the 'native' or federal schools. They were less handicapped, too, by the language problem, because their Eskimo pupils quickly and easily acquired a smattering of English from their white playmates. Nevertheless, the instruction in the territorial schools seems to have been very little superior to that in the federal schools, except perhaps in the larger settlements. Both were plagued by the same trouble, the rapid turnover of their teachers and the difficulty of finding qualified persons to replace them.

Let us now end this survey of Eskimo education between the two world wars by analysing the defects which made it so inferior to elementary and secondary school education in the United States, and militated so strongly against the Eskimos' attainment of social and economic equality with white Alaskans. We can discern four serious weaknesses:

- (a) Poorly qualified teachers;
- (b) Poor teaching methods and unsuitable textbooks;
- (c) Excessive load on the teachers and inadequate supervision;
- (d) Inadequate school facilities.

These four weaknesses have been discussed in detail by several education-
alists, the latest being Dr. Charles K. Ray, Professor of Education at the University of Alaska. Here there is space for only the briefest summary of their conclusions.

Nearly all Alaskan teachers prior to the Second World War had trained and gained their experience in white schools in the United States: many had never proceeded beyond high school. Naturally they possessed little or no knowledge of village communities in northern Alaska, where life flowed altogether differently and the everyday speech was not English but Eskimo. They were transplanted without preparation to the Arctic, usually to some isolated village where the natives spoke very little English, and for months it was impossible to communicate with the outside world; and there, alone and without advice or help from their district superiors—who in those days of restricted communications were seldom able to visit the widely scattered schools under their jurisdiction more often than once, or occasionally twice, in the year—they were called upon to cope with unfamiliar conditions and difficult tasks not covered or even mentioned in any teaching manual. Their teaching year, and teaching hours, coincided very closely with those of California; they did not take into account the long mid-winter darkness and its blizzards, or the seasonal migrations of the Eskimos with all or part of their families to and from the trapping-grounds, the fishing-places, and the round-up stations of the reindeer. The textbooks prescribed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs were selected from those used in various states of the Union, and dealt with many topics, for example, wheat-farming, hardly intelligible to Eskimo children who had never seen a ploughed field, a flock of poultry, or a tree larger than an alder bush. The frame or log school-buildings, whether they contained two classrooms or only one, usually needed repair, lacked running water and indoor facilities, were poorly lighted, and, until the introduction of oil-burning stoves, poorly heated with wood or coal; while the teachers' homes, even when detached from the schools, carried only the simplest and cheapest furniture and were hardly more comfortable than the classrooms.¹ As for the extra-curricula duties of

¹See the description of school buildings and teachers' houses in Anderson and Eells (1935, chap. 37).

the teachers, the mere summary of them quoted a few pages earlier (p. 21) suffices to show that only supermen could perform them adequately, or, if not supermen, individuals specially trained in administration along the general lines that England, Belgium, and other countries trained selected university graduates for their colonial services. Yet the United States teachers haphazardly recruited for the Alaskan service received no administrative training whatsoever.

The strictures launched by a highly qualified anthropologist ten years ago against the teaching service of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Aleutian Islands throw light on the same service in the adjoining Eskimo region between the two world wars. He writes:

"Most of these people [Aleuts] have a very poor knowledge of English. . . . Their deficiency in English is a source of much misunderstanding and is a serious handicap in securing employment. . . . The level of instruction received by the Aleuts is much below that given other citizens of the United States. The seventh grade at the Alaska Native Service school corresponds roughly to the fourth or fifth grade in a state school. Much reliance is placed on comic magazines to keep the children occupied. . . . Without exception the teachers appear to arrive without advance instruction concerning the people, their economy, language or history. This makes the duty of the teacher very difficult. They receive no handbooks or instruction which would enable them to establish intelligent relations with the people. They do not understand the village organization, how things are done, nor do they have a practical knowledge of the people. In some cases teachers from regions where discrimination against the Negroes is practised have transferred their prejudices to the Aleuts. . . . Teachers in the Aleutians rarely remain more than one or two years. . . . In summary, the teachers do not enjoy the confidence of the people among whom they work. They are expected to perform administrative duties for which they have no training. The Aleut children are not being given satisfactory instruction in the English language and the adults are not receiving any instruction in English." (Laughlin, 1950, pp. 6, 7, 8, 11, 13).

And the writer concludes:

"The possibility that a grade school teacher can not render satisfactory teaching service and at the same time make decisions involving the economic and political welfare of the Aleuts, should be seriously studied. Grade school teachers in the States do not administer villages. If the grade school teachers are to continue village administration then the necessary training should be given them." (Laughlin, 1950, p. 31).

It may be doubted whether educational conditions in the Eskimo area farther north were at any time quite as sombre as Professor Laughlin paints them for the Aleutian Islands. One could not expect all Eskimo teachers to attain the stature of William T. Lopp, the man who in mid-winter 1898, directed a drive of around 400 reindeer from Wales to Point Barrow to save from starvation the stranded crews of eight whaling vessels. But there were others too, who enjoyed the respect and confidence of the natives among whom they worked: indeed the University of Pittsburgh health team of 1954 paid special tribute to "the fine and devoted work being done by the teachers in ANS [Alaska Native Service] schools." (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 4, p. 13). Taking the broadest view, one would judge that the average teacher in the Eskimo area resembled rather closely the average grade-school teacher in the United States. With a people as unique as the Eskimos, however, in an environment as exceptional as that of northern Alaska, only grade-school teachers much better than the average could meet the challenge successfully.

When we consider the low qualifications of the teachers, and the irresponsible manner in which they were thrown into a strange and far from easy

environment, we cannot wonder that many of them, unendowed with the zeal of the missionary or the challenging spirit of the frontiersman, quickly weakened before so many hardships and problems for which neither urban nor rural life in the United States had prepared them, threw in their gloves at the end of the first or second winter and asked to be repatriated at the earliest opportunity. So high, in fact, was the rate of teacher turnover between and also after the two world wars that one Commissioner of Education openly confessed that teaching in Alaska was a procession rather than a profession. It was in vain that the Bureau of Education, and subsequently the Bureau of Indian Affairs, raised the teachers' salaries. The turnover continued, affecting the territorial schools as much as the federal ones; and even today's amenities of daily radio contacts and frequent aircraft connections have failed to stem the outgoing tide. After quoting rates of from 15 to 25 per cent for the annual turnover during the five years 1953 to 1958, Ray comments resignedly:

"it may be impractical to expect superior personnel to content themselves with primitive conditions in remote communities for long periods of time. Irregular mail service, limited or non-existent supplies of fresh foods, and commonly sub-standard living accommodations without modern facilities seriously restrict the appeal of these positions except perhaps on a short-term basis." (1959, p. 251).

Let us now pass from the educational activities of the Bureau of Education for Alaska, and its successor the Bureau of Indian Affairs, to their second major function—their second radio beam, to repeat our earlier metaphor—the maintenance of Eskimo health.

Eskimo health

Washington quickly raised its annual appropriation for the Bureau of Education for Alaska from a niggardly \$25,000, which was all it allotted during each of the first two years of the Bureau's operations, to \$30,000, \$40,000, and for a time \$50,000; but even this last sum barely sufficed to pay for the erection and maintenance of the most necessary schools and the low salaries of their teachers. It could not provide medical care for the teachers, nor for the native communities that they served. In those early years, however, the Bureau always tried to appoint one teacher who had received medical training; and invariably one or more of the missionaries stationed north of the Aleutian Islands was a fully qualified medical man. Moreover, the revenue steamer, when it made its round of the coast each summer, never failed to send its doctor ashore at every place of call to treat without distinction natives and white men.

In 1900, immediately after the gold rush, Washington attached a surgeon to its military outpost at Nome, and about the same time the Methodist church opened a small hospital in that town: but in that same year, 1900, an epidemic of measles carried off an estimated 25 per cent of Alaska's Eskimo population and starkly revealed the inadequacy of the region's embryonic health system. The Bureau of Education then redoubled its efforts, with funds that were still grievously insufficient, although greater than in earlier years. It supplied medicines and medical textbooks to many of the remoter schools, engaged more physicians whenever it was possible, and contracted with one or two outside doctors to serve districts that otherwise would have lacked any medical care. By 1911 it had attached five doctors and two nurses to its payroll for

work among the Eskimos; and it was subsidizing a medical missionary at Barrow and a private physician in Nome. It had already built two small hospital units, one at Juneau and one in Bristol Bay. Now it added a third, at Nulato on the Yukon River; and at the same time it contracted for the treatment of Eskimos in the hospital at Nome. It expected the staffs of these hospitals—each carried one doctor and two nurses—to train a few native boys and girls who later would perform useful medical and sanitary work in their own communities; but it saw no likelihood, either then or at any time in the foreseeable future, that any Eskimos would become fully qualified medical practitioners, because the education it was placing within their reach did not nearly approach medical-school level.

In the years 1911–13 the United States carried out its first survey of the health of Alaska's natives, both Eskimos and Indians. Though far from complete, it indicated that at least 15 per cent of them were tuberculous, and that venereal disease, trachoma, and rheumatism were prevalent in many villages. Three years later Congress for the first time voted a small sum (\$25,000, raised to \$50,000 the following year), definitely earmarked for medical aid. Armed with this extra money the Bureau of Education increased its medical staff, and was operating four unit hospitals within Eskimo territory when Alaska was invaded by the influenza virus that afflicted the whole world at the end of the First World War. The disease ravaged the Eskimos almost as severely as the measles epidemic of twenty years earlier: on the Seward Peninsula alone it wiped out all the inhabitants of at least one community, and probably of more than one. The medical services of the Bureau of Education and of the territorial government, hopelessly understaffed and under-equipped, could provide little help in the face of so great a calamity. The Bureau did indeed accept for a few years the responsibility of caring for all the orphaned children whom the surviving natives and the missions were unable to take in. It established three orphanages to give them proper care. But in 1926 it converted all three institutions into vocational boarding-schools, on the plea that the care of orphans, whether native or white, lay outside its responsibility and should be borne by the territorial government and the missions.

Immediately after the influenza epidemic the Bureau inaugurated the policy of shipping to Seattle any Eskimos, but particularly children, who needed special surgery or medical treatment; and in 1925 it commissioned one of its nurses to investigate the health of Eskimo children between the Bering Sea and Point Barrow. From 1926 onward, too, it kept a medical vessel in service on the Yukon, a vessel that cruised from June to September of each year up the river and down again, carrying a doctor, a dentist, and two nurses to service every person who sought their aid in the villages and camps along the waterway.

Despite these various measures, a large percentage of the Eskimo population still remained beyond the reach of any medical care; and only a minority saw a doctor more often than once a year. As for hospitals, Anderson and Eells, who investigated social and educational conditions in 1930 and 1931, declared:

"It is highly probable that native hospitals are not prepared to care for more than 5 per cent of the natives who should be hospitalized in order to insure their recovery or to prevent the spread of acute infectious diseases among the rest of the native population." (1935, p. 406).

And after an epidemic of whooping cough in 1931 had carried off many Eskimo children in Bristol Bay, and in the same year influenza had stricken 75 per cent of the natives on the Seward Peninsula, the same writers flatly affirmed that

"As yet no organization has been developed by the government with the responsibility of caring for the Eskimos and safeguarding the health of these people." (1935, p. 142).

Clearly the Bureau of Education was making little headway in meeting the health requirements of its Eskimo wards, even though Congress increased its medical funds year by year until they totalled \$319,000 in 1931, five times their amount in 1918. Nor did the Alaska Native Service of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which took over the task in 1931, accomplish much more than its predecessor. Improved equipment may have lessened the hazards of the hunters' life, and imported foods prevented the famines that winter storms had often brought in pre-European times. But these same foods had unbalanced the diet; and malnutrition, combined with unsanitary conditions in their homes, had weakened the physical constitutions of the natives, whom centuries of isolation from the outside world had rendered little resistant to some of civilization's most prevalent diseases. A survey made in 1937, shortly before the Second World War, raised the tuberculosis rate among the Eskimos from the 15 per cent reported by the 1913 survey to 25 per cent, and estimated the death rate among Alaska's Eskimos and Indians combined at 600-800 per 100,000, twelve times that of Alaska's white population and ten times that of the United States. Only the high birth-rate among the natives, especially among the Eskimos, kept their number from decreasing. From 1880 to 1950, if we may trust the census figures, their population remained practically stationary.

In addition to education and health, Congress had entrusted to the Bureau of Education a third major task in Alaska, the promotion of the economic welfare of the Eskimos and the raising of their living standard. Let us now survey its activities in this field and weigh its successes and its failures.

Economic changes

Northern Alaska's catch of white fox and other fur-bearers remained relatively constant throughout the first forty years of this century, because the animal population and the number of trappers did not greatly change, and the territory possessed no virgin lands over which the Eskimos could expand and set their traps. Fur prices rose, however, and with them the cash returns to the trappers, so that the Point Barrow native who in 1913 had earned a maximum of \$300 from his winter's catch of twenty foxes—an average for that year and region—was earning up to \$500 between the two world wars.¹ But the prices of other goods rose faster than those of furs, so that the increase in the trapper's income did not really improve his over-all position or raise his standard of living: this still remained one of bare subsistence, as in the pre-European epoch when fox-pelts were valueless and he gained his livelihood by hunting and fishing alone. Obviously the Bureau of Education could not control the changes in

¹"The estimated average family income which is used for store foods and other white man's goods is somewhere between \$300 and \$500 a year." (Anderson and Eells, 1935, p. 202). This was in 1930.

world prices; but it could and did weaken their impact, as we have seen, and protect the Eskimo from commercial exploitation, by helping him to market his furs and handicrafts, and to purchase some of his needs, through its Seattle office, which could procure him more favourable prices than were obtainable locally. In the 1920's it modified this policy by fostering the establishment in Eskimo villages of small cooperative stores which could render the same services; but for many years poor management, under-capitalization, and the more liberal credit offered by competitive white traders sapped the life-blood of these stores and kept them barely functioning.

"The undisciplined and unsupervised activities of white traders in native villages in the more remote sections of Alaska do not result favorably for the natives. Against their relatively strong competition native co-operatives, which are worthy enterprises directed toward increasing the economic stability of the native people, cannot succeed. The system of credit which the white traders have fostered is rapidly demoralizing the natives, reducing them to a state of economic peonage from which there are increasingly fewer means of escape. The government should capitalize native co-operative stores and supervise them more adequately, directing efforts toward the eventual economic independence of the natives. Private traders in native villages should be subject to strict government regulation." (Anderson and Eells, 1935, pp. 211-12).

Strictures against cold-blooded traders who hold unsophisticated natives in economic bondage through the giving of credit have been heard in many lands, and ring very familiar to Canadians who have studied the history of the fur trade in their dominion. Yet the problem is a complex one that does not admit of snap judgments, since many traders and trading firms have scrupulously employed the credit system for the benefit of their native clients—to tide them over difficult times, for example, as a banker will finance a good farmer after a season of drought.

It need cause us no surprise that most of the cooperative stores at this period were badly managed, seeing that neither the Eskimos themselves, nor probably the school-teachers who were their mentors, had previously acquired any business experience or training. This handicap notwithstanding, a few stores, notably one at Savoonga on St. Lawrence Island, proved reasonably prosperous; and their financial success greatly encouraged the Bureau of Education, because it proved that at least some of the natives were not lacking in commercial ability. It therefore continued its support of the cooperatives, despite occasional criticism that it was interfering with the play of free enterprise; and the Bureau of Indian Affairs carried on the same policy without change. Without doubt the government's unpaid "middleman" services, and its financial backing, worked to the detriment of the local white traders; but they definitely benefited the Eskimos, and after all, it was to raise the living standards and improve the education of the Eskimos that Washington had made the two Bureaus their guardians.

The post-war history of the cooperative store movement can be summed up in a single paragraph. The revolving fund set up by the Wheeler-Howard Act of 1934 provided ample money for the movement's expansion, and by 1950 there were 33 community stores, Eskimo-owned and operated, in as many villages. Twenty of them, along with 7 Aleut and Alaska-Indian stores, the Bureau of Indian Affairs organized into a larger purchasing and merchandizing cooperative which made Seattle its headquarters. In that mid-century period, government officials believed that the movement was working fairly well,

benefiting those villages particularly that were too small to attract private merchants; but a Congressional committee appointed in 1958 to investigate the operation of the Wheeler-Howard revolving fund sharply castigated the Bureau of Indian Affairs on two grounds:

1. It had failed to establish any program "in the schools, on the job, or otherwise to train Indians [and Eskimos] to assume top management positions in what was supposed to be their own business undertakings." (Rogers, 1960, p. 235).
2. It had failed to "carry out the Wheeler-Howard Act's objective of fostering the broadening and diversification of the Indian's [and Eskimo's] economic base." (Rogers, 1960, p. 235).

Amplifying its second criticism, and referring more specifically to the Alaskan panhandle, although regarding with one eye the Eskimo area farther north, the committee declared:

"Unfortunately, the credit-assistance program in Alaska has done virtually nothing to encourage new economic opportunities for the native villages in southeast Alaska. Revolving-fund loans to chartered communities in Alaska for purposes other than fishing have been of only one type: loans to villages for operation of local stores or trading posts." (Rogers, 1960, p. 235).

The economist from whom I have culled these quotations added two further criticisms:

1. "As it has worked out, the incorporation of an association or the acceptance of a loan has carried with it the virtual surrender of sovereignty in all future matters to agents of the Secretary of the Interior." (Rogers, 1960, p. 229).
2. "Because of the remoteness from the scene and the limited first-hand experience of personnel of the Washington office of the Bureau [of Indian Affairs], the retention by that office of control over many of the details of the native loan program conflicts with sound administrative practice" (p. 263).

Elsewhere this economist bluntly defines the second criticism as the

"tendency of a Washington-headquartered bureau to 'run the show' from home base." (p. 263).

Washington's activities in the reindeer industry broadly paralleled its intervention in the fur trade and the small-goods market. Prior to 1931, when it surrendered some of its functions to the territorial government, the Alaskan Division of the Bureau of Education regulated the native part of the reindeer industry through a superintendent stationed at Teller, in the Seward Peninsula. The superintendent made frequent inspection tours within the Eskimo area, working very closely with the Bureau's school-teachers, who for their part promoted associations of native reindeer-owners in a number of villages, checked the tallies of round-ups, and supervised the registers of ownership. The herds grew rapidly: in 1914 Alaska could count about 58,000 reindeer, 64 per cent of them owned outright by Eskimos, 17 per cent by Laplanders brought from Norway to train the Alaskan natives, 12 per cent by various missions, and 7 per cent still in government hands. Three years later the reindeer population was estimated at 95,000, and the cash return it brought the Eskimos in that year at \$91,430, over and above a large but undetermined quantity of meat and hides which the natives reserved for their own use. By 1931, when the Bureau of Education was abolished, the number of Eskimos dependent mainly on reindeer for their livelihood had reached approximately 13,000, of whom no fewer than 2,500 owned their own deer. Thus Sheldon Jackson's dream of forty years earlier had been quickly fulfilled. The food resource which he had introduced

to save the Eskimos from starvation had become the mainstay of 85 per cent of the population.

But already a tempest was brewing. As early as 1898, when the Nome gold rush was creating a heavy demand for meat, a few white men had been attracted by the commercial possibilities of reindeer-herding. At that time the federal government had frowned on their participation, fearing that it would cripple the young and struggling industry which it was building up for the benefit of the natives. It even issued a regulation, in 1907, forbidding the sale of live female deer to non-natives, thereby rendering it illegal, it believed, for any white man to acquire the ownership of a herd. In spite of this regulation, the Lomen company of Nome, unchallenged by the government, purchased in 1914 several thousand reindeer (including the usual percentage of females) not from the Eskimos, but from some of the Laplanders and two of the missions; and it hired Lapps and Eskimos to look after its deer on the Seward Peninsula, in close proximity to some native-owned herds. The inevitable happened. Within a few years native and company herds intermingled, and no one could discover any satisfactory means of determining ownership, since branding as with cattle was impracticable for long-haired, thin-skinned reindeer, and the numerous earmarks that were substituted for brands so resembled each other as to be indistinguishable. First confusion arose, then strife. The native reindeer-owners loudly accused the company of stealing their deer, the hired herders became disgruntled, and the company itself encountered financial difficulties when the operations of transporting and marketing the meat proved more complicated and costly than it had anticipated. Other white men who had bought reindeer, and were dabbling in the industry experienced the same difficulties; and the herds themselves suffered from poor management, since many Eskimo herders lost heart and failed to handle them properly.

In addition to management troubles, white men and Eskimos alike had to contend against nature's hazards. Large numbers of reindeer, poorly controlled, joined the herds of wild caribou that migrated seasonally through parts of their grazing grounds. Others fell victims to wolves and lynxes. Still others, crazed by bot-flies and warble-flies, broke away from the herds and died of starvation: for the overgrazing that followed mismanagement stripped the moss and lichen cover from large areas of what had once been good range country, and under the slow growth conditions of the Arctic these areas required twenty or more years of rest for the cover to return. The Laplanders of northern Europe, who have lived with the reindeer for centuries, reduce the fly hazard by repeatedly moving their herds to new and uninfected pastures. But the Eskimos are hunters by tradition, not herders. Prior to the nineteenth century, they knew of no domestic animal except the dog: and they did not take kindly to the 'close-herding' techniques that their Lapp instructors taught them. It went against their nature to leave the sociable settlements on or near the sea and to camp among reindeer, guiding the animals' movements from one pasture-ground to another, day after day and month after month, whatever the character of the country, the season, and the weather. They preferred a less arduous system of managing the deer, even if it was less efficient—an 'open-herding' system which allowed the animals to wander wherever they wished and required their round-up only for marking and for slaughter.

The turmoil and strife over reindeer ownership and management did not end in 1931 with the transfer of authority from the Bureau of Education to the

Office of the Governor of Alaska. Rather it increased, unabated by the suggestions of live-stock experts and the recommendations of various commissions. In the end it was the Lomen company itself which proposed the only practicable solution, namely, that the federal government should buy out all the white owners and return to the situation that had prevailed in the first decade of the century, thereby making it possible once more to maintain the industry as a monopoly of the Eskimos for as long as they remained a separate people. By this procedure, the company claimed, the government could repay the white owners for their heavy outlays, protect and probably advance the interests of the Eskimos, and create the conditions favourable for rebuilding the disorganized reindeer herds and reviving a commercial industry that had virtually collapsed.

The federal government accepted the proposal. In 1937 it gave jurisdiction over the reindeer to the Alaska Native Service (A.N.S.) branch of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which had succeeded to the duties and taken over most of the staff of the defunct Bureau of Education in Alaska; and it bought out in 1939-40 not only the Lomen company, but 39 other non-Eskimo owners, including the Laplanders and the missions.

Nevertheless, the reindeer industry failed to recover from the chaos into which it had fallen, because the Second World War which had just broken out lured many Eskimo herders and trappers by its high wages into the defence program. At the same time it stimulated a heavy demand among the military for fur parkas, which caused excessive slaughter of both young and old reindeer, females as well as males, and gravely unbalanced the herds. Not until the war neared its end was it possible to start rebuilding.

Reindeer herding was a year-round occupation, but because it was not very popular with a race of hunters that lacked any tradition of herding, it absorbed only a fraction of the Eskimo labour force between the two world wars. Moreover, it added very little to the cash income of most natives, although it yielded enormously valuable returns in food and clothing. Fur-trapping brought in a larger money return, but was possible in winter only; while longshoring, work in mining camps, and similar wage-occupations were restricted to the four or five months of summer, and to a few places far removed from most of the Eskimo settlements. What the natives sorely needed were occupations that would add substantially to the community's income, and could be practiced in or near the village at every season of the year; but the only such occupation known to them was handicraft work, and that was neither stable nor sufficiently remunerative.

From as early as the mid-nineteenth century a handful of Eskimos along the coast had carved small figurines from walrus and mammoth ivory to sell to the crews of whaling vessels, and to the traders, missionaries, and school-teachers who succeeded them; and curio shops in Seattle had displayed these bibelots in their windows along with argillite carvings from the Queen Charlotte Islands, and figures of wood, bone, ivory, and jade from the Orient. Their handicraft work brought the Eskimos useful house-money, enough at times to support one entire family in a settlement, especially if the articles were mailed direct to the Seattle office of the Bureau of Education and sold without commission in the luxury market of that city. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that before the century ended an enterprising trader taught the natives to convert hand sewing-machines into small lathes, and to turn out ivory necklaces, cribbage-boards, and various other knick-knacks alien to Eskimo culture—not to mention

imitations of rare archaeological specimens that could be 'aged' by immersion in strong solutions of coffee, alder, or other stain and passed off as genuine antiques to unwary collectors.

The Bureau of Education concerned itself very little with these Eskimo handicrafts, although it allowed the craftsmen to use its school tools (including lathes where there were any), and marketed their ivories along with their furs. Its successor, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, displayed more interest. For nearly a hundred years this organization had administered the Indians of the United States, and it was fully familiar with the attractive rugs, baskets, painted pottery, and silverwork which some of the tribes sold to tourists or placed more or less at random on the local markets. To protect and expand these activities, it set up in 1936 an Indian Arts and Crafts Board, which promoted public exhibits of Indian handicrafts, "hall-marked" goods that attained a satisfactory standard, and fed them to dealers in various cities across the country. The Board knew, of course, that handicraft work would always be a minor activity, that by itself it could never provide the Indians with a solid economic base or raise their living standards to the level of that of the white men around them.

"The Indian Arts and Crafts Board does not wish to delude the public, the Indians, or itself into assuming that increased arts and crafts production is the answer to the Indians' economic problems. The number of Indians interested in, and capable of, superior arts and crafts work cannot be indefinitely expanded; and there is a limit also to the amount of goods which the market can absorb. But this much is certainly true: that the top limit has not nearly been reached; and in reaching it, a number of Indians can support themselves in crafts work, and a much larger number, especially of women, can augment their incomes from this source." (U.S. Dept. Int. 1938, pp. 234-5).

From the year of its establishment the Arts and Crafts Board took Eskimo as well as Indian handicrafts under its wing. It tried to improve the quality of Alaskan (particularly King Island and St. Lawrence Island) ivory carvings, which had deteriorated in the face of Japanese competition; and it organized in Nome the Skin Sewers Cooperative Association, which adapted and restyled some of the native garments, and kept over fifty Eskimo women busily engaged in making parkas and mukluks that commercial traders and Admiral Byrd's first Antarctic Expedition bought up as fast as they were produced. The Association was indeed well-timed. Less than five years later, when the Second World War was at its height, it was supplying large quantities of sealskin footwear and light, warm, reindeer-fur parkas to the armed forces of the United States, and giving much needed incomes to a small but appreciable number of families out of the profits.¹

Fishing and sea mammal hunting, fur trapping, reindeer herding, handicrafts, and occasional wage-employment—these occupations helped to keep the wolf of hunger from the Eskimos' doors but provided no more than mere subsistence: they did not improve the diet, build homes as comfortable as those of white Alaskans, or supply the material and social amenities the latter enjoyed. Contact with whites had increased the number of the natives' necessities and desires without furnishing sufficient means to satisfy them; and between Eskimo living conditions and those of white Alaskans yawned a wide gap. The latter enjoyed better education, better health, and firmer associations with the outside world. To reach equality with them the Eskimos needed a much stronger economy; and no sure base or bases for such an economy had so far come into view.

¹For further details of this Association see U.S. Dept. Int. 1949, pp. 36-7.

PERIOD III: 1939-60

Wartime changes

The Second World War erupted in 1939, and three years later the Japanese invasion of the western Aleutian Islands brought Alaska right into the front line. Thousands of soldiers flooded into the territory until military personnel and their dependents made up almost half the population. The construction workers who entered with them built new roads and pipe-lines in strategic areas, and spattered the land with airfields that extended the network of skyways blazed by bush-pilots between the two world wars. From Ketchikan to Point Barrow Alaska seethed with activity.

The Eskimos could not escape the turmoil, even if their exact political status remained a lawyer's conundrum. At the beginning of the century they had been neither citizens nor aliens, merely wards of the federal government. The Wheeler-Howard (or Indian Reorganization) Act of 1934 implicitly re-affirmed their wardship, and this has been their status to the present day, although in 1952 a subcommittee of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs recommended "The end of wardship or trust status as not acceptable to our American way of life" (Gruening, 1954, p. 355). But since 1924 they have been citizens also, for a federal law of that year extended citizenship to all Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States who had not yet received it; and this law, it was ruled, applied to the Indians and Eskimos of Alaska (Gruening, 1954, p. 363). As citizens, therefore, they are entitled if literate to vote in elections, and they are liable, too, to property taxation. In actual fact only a very few do vote or pay property taxes, because their villages are too scattered, their population too small, and their households too impoverished, to justify the cost of setting up special voting polls or of collecting the taxes. However, they are subject also to selective service; and at least 400 put on uniform during the Second World War, served in Alaska (or, in a few cases, outside it) throughout the course of the conflict, and drew at its close the free medical care to which veterans are entitled. A considerably greater number worked on paramilitary tasks such as the maintenance of airfields, the laying of oil pipe-lines, and the operation of light and heavy machinery. So well did both the military and the paramilitary services acquit themselves that when war broke out in Korea a few years later:

"Two battalions of natives were organized for use as scouts throughout the sparsely settled portions of the Territory of Alaska. The First Battalion consists of Eskimos from the coastal plains between Barrow and Unalakleet. The personnel of the Second are from the coastal plains between Unalakleet and Dillingham. They are obviously the only military personnel who could, in time of emergency, live off the land and exist in this barren, frozen territory. They have had considerable military training in camps and are considered a most valuable adjunct to the security of this entire area."¹

The Second World War and the Korean War later, provoked a grave upheaval in the Eskimo settlements, for the military establishments that sprang up along the coasts and in the interior not only restricted the movements and activities of the natives, but opened up, overnight as it were, unlimited opportunities for wage-employment. Thus military operations in and around Nome

¹Letter from Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1954; quoted by Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 4, p. 54.

placed the grazing grounds of 5,000 reindeer out of bounds to their Eskimo owners and indirectly sentenced to destruction the entire herd; but the same operations stimulated so great a demand for native curios and fur clothing that in one year, 1944, the ivory carvers and the Nome Skin Sewers Cooperative Association sold about \$200,000 dollars worth of goods to the armed forces. Everywhere money began to flow freely, for Eskimo soldiers and labourers recruited by the military slept in quonset huts, ate the same food, and received the same wages as white soldiers and labourers brought in from the United States. Most of their work, too, was not seasonal, as their hunting and trapping had been, but continued throughout the whole year, giving them a steady, predictable income. It was, therefore, inevitable that such golden opportunities for wage-employment should stir up little waves of migration from communities outside the immediate foci of military activities. Numbers of natives left their reindeer herds, abandoned their trap-lines, and moved with their families to army and air force establishments within their own region, or to bases farther away in the Gulf of Alaska, Fairbanks, and other places. Only a few, and these mainly single men, reached the more distant bases; the majority settled around the military establishments at Barrow, Kotzebue, and half a dozen villages within the Bering Sea, where they swelled the local Eskimo population, but left the neighbouring coastlines denuded of a notable percentage of their inhabitants.

This shifting of population was not a new phenomenon in the area. On or near the coast of northern Alaska archaeologists have found numerous remains of ancient settlements, some of which were inhabited as late as the last century, others before the time of Christ. It is not difficult to understand why the Eskimos settled in some of these now deserted localities: there were numerous seals in the vicinity, perhaps, or a river abounding in salmon. Very rarely, however, have we any clue why they abandoned them. Yet we know that towards the end of the nineteenth century epidemics of white-introduced diseases and mass slaughter of the caribou herds brought about a depopulation of the coastline and hinterland between Point Barrow and the Mackenzie delta; also that the same epidemics wiped out some settlements in the Bering Sea. On the other hand, we know that in the early years of the present century several new villages were established around the mouths of the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers, and that those prospered which were on or near the sites of earlier villages, presumably because the ecological conditions at these sites were more favourable than elsewhere. Down to the Second World War, indeed, it was the local ecological conditions—the food resources in the immediate neighbourhood—that rigidly restricted the number of inhabitants any settlement could sustain. In 1931 the mean population of all villages north of Bering Strait was 165, and south of Bering Strait just half that number: and in 1940, out of more than 200 Eskimo communities in northern Alaska, only 20 contained more than 200 inhabitants, and not a single one as many as 500. Nevertheless, from the time white men began to settle along the coast and introduce the first elements of a wage-and-money economy, there had developed a natural tendency for the natives to concentrate as far as possible around the missions, the schools, and the trading-posts. Consequently, when the military and paramilitary establishments suddenly provided hitherto undreamed-of opportunities for trade and wage-employment, the Eskimos irresistibly fluttered toward them like moths

to a candle. The demographic effect can be exemplified by a few statistics (Ray, 1959, pp. 113 *et seq.*).

Place	Population			
	1930	1940	1950	1957
Barrow	330	363	951	1,274
Kotzebue	291	372	623	854
Unalakleet	261	329	469	525
Bethel	278	376	651	1,000

These four places all continued to grow after the war ended and the military pulled up their stakes. Kotzebue, Unalakleet, and Bethel were important communication centres, accessible by both air and sea: in addition, Kotzebue contained a hospital, and Bethel both a hospital and a high school. At Point Barrow, the "end-of-the-line village" on the northernmost tip of Alaska, Washington established a research centre for the study of arctic problems, and from 1944 to 1953 made the locality a base for naval oil-prospecting operations that provided winter and summer employment to between 50 and 100 Eskimos. Certain military bases, on the other hand, were less fortunate: they lost part of their native populations when the soldiers and airmen withdrew.

Life at these bases wrought the natives both good and ill. Eskimo men proved themselves steady labourers, cheerful in the face of hardships and willing to brave the coldest and stormiest weather. Some of them acquired new skills: they became proficient carpenters and plumbers, or they learned to operate diesel engines, and heavy and light machinery. Regular work and good pay raised their economic status more nearly to the level of the white men; an abundant and well-balanced diet improved their health; and frequent medical examinations helped to check the spread of tuberculosis and other diseases. During the early years of the war racial prejudice attempted to raise its head. A few restaurants refused to serve non-whites; a motion-picture theatre in Nome—the only theatre in the town—protected the human sheep from the human goats by segregating them on opposite sides of the middle aisle; and United States Ordnance establishments admitted Eskimo men in uniform, but barred their doors to Eskimo girls. Fortunately Alaska was still in the main a frontier region where a man's worth rested more on his abilities and character than on his colour or facial appearance; and although racial intolerance can never be abolished by legislation that runs counter to a large body of public opinion, when the territorial legislature in 1945 passed an anti-discrimination law that prohibited such anti-social practices, the relations between Eskimos and white men sensibly improved. Two Eskimos, one from Nome and one from Wales, were elected to the territorial House of Representatives in 1948; and in 1950, when one of them retired and his colleague passed on to the Senate, two other Eskimos took their places in the House.

Yet while one side of the picture shone with sunlight, the other was darkened by a heavy cloud. The Eskimos were citizens, entitled to buy and drink liquor as freely as other citizens; and, like most natives unfamiliar with any stimulant until they came into contact with white men, they drank without restraint. In their home villages, where trade still operated on a barter basis and demanded little or no circulation of money, liquor had been available very rarely, and then in minute quantities only; but in the military bases it flowed

like water. So drunkenness became the native's besetting weakness: his hard-earned wages evaporated in the bar-rooms; and his inebriety, with its attendant excesses and weakening of resistance to the widely spread tuberculosis, largely nullified the benefits he derived from year-round employment, good food, and medical attention.

"Liquor is the most destructive single factor in the welfare of the native in Alaska today. Our welfare records will show you that if we had a way of controlling this matter of liquor, we could reduce our welfare expenditures at least 50 percent. . . . At least 65 to 70 percent of the cases that are now in the hospital with TB today may be directly or indirectly caused by liquor. It may be a matter of malnutrition, it may be a matter of poor housing, but they just add up to one thing—liquor. . . . We can't refuse to sell liquor to the natives in Alaska, because it would be out and out discrimination." (U.S. Dept. Int. 1949, pp. 26-8, 29).

So testified the General Superintendent of the Alaska Native Service before a Special Group designated by the Secretary of the Interior to investigate living conditions among the natives of the Pribilof Islands and other communities of the Bering Sea area. The district attorney at Nome added his testimony:

"I believe the chief problem of the native people here from an economic standpoint is liquor. . . . I don't claim to be bone dry, but I have found that that is the thing that is holding these people back, and that is the thing that causes 95 percent of the crimes that appear upon our record. In other words, at least 95 percent of our defendants have committed their crimes while under the influence of liquor, and 90 percent of them are natives." (U.S. Dept. Int. 1949, p. 38).

Significantly, the two Pribilof Islands escaped this plague, because under international agreement the United States government administered them as fur-seal reservations and prohibited the importation of any intoxicating liquor. So there was no drunkenness on the islands, and in 1949 only one active case of tuberculosis on St. Paul Island among its 335 Aleut inhabitants.

Drunkenness and prostitution go hand in hand the world over, especially at military encampments where young soldiers live uprooted from their homes, relieved of immediate responsibility for their families, and detached from the restraining influences of relatives and friends. In northern Alaska the Eskimos too had been uprooted, and their moral code, different from the white man's and in some respects laxer, suffered the same strain and underwent as grave debasement as the soldiers'. While Eskimo men staggered in the bar-rooms, their wives and daughters, confronted with new distractions and with idle hours on their hands, surrendered themselves to the oldest profession in the world; and both their sons and their daughters were arrested as juvenile delinquents, because they failed to conform to the legal code of the white man. Just as teenagers from the hills of Kentucky and Tennessee easily lose their way in the jungles of Chicago and New York, so these hardy Eskimos, but recently emerged from the stone age, strayed and bogged down in the fens of United States military bases, and a people that had fought and survived the rigours of the Arctic for 5,000 years threatened to dissolve into a horde of degenerates.

Eskimo economy

Finally the war ended, the military bases were dismantled, and most of the Eskimos returned to their homes. But with the ending of the war ended also their wages. Those who had served in the armed forces received the statutory

pensions, and natives who enrolled in the two scout battalions authorized in 1948—the First Battalion numbered 456 men in 1954, the Second 542—received a minimum of \$87 yearly. The old, the blind, and every dependent child received through the Territorial Department of Welfare, from federal funds, the monthly allowances granted to those categories in the United States (they averaged about \$57, \$55, and \$32 monthly), while the welfare branch of the Alaska Native Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, cared for the unemployed, the physically handicapped, and other needy cases. All these payments amounted in the aggregate to a very considerable sum, computed for nine villages in the Kotzebue-Noatak-Kobuk region at no less than \$791.58 per family yearly (Ray, 1959, pp. 176-7), or about twice the income a man could earn from trapping foxes. It was never the government's intention, of course, that welfare payments should take the place of earned income or encourage the Eskimos to cease working; but when most of the natives were demobilized or lost their wartime jobs these allowances greatly eased the return to the old village existence, and to the peaceful life of hunting, trapping, fishing, and reindeer herding that could bring in most of the daily bread perhaps, but only a very meagre amount of hard cash. At Barrow alone did the demand for wage labour continue undiminished, because the oil explorations mentioned already, and also a scientific research program, stepped into the gap left by the military and dispensed equally large sums for goods and services.

Whatever statesmen and lawyers may claim, it is never really possible to return to a *status quo ante*; and it is therefore not surprising that the Eskimos who drifted back to their villages after the war encountered conditions considerably different from those that they had left. From some districts the herds of wild caribou had disappeared, driven away or shot by the soldiers, or massacred without thought of conservation by Eskimos armed with government weapons and supplied with abundant ammunition by the Territorial Guard. In 1950 the Fish and Wildlife Service of the federal government called a meeting of the Kotzebue natives, who had been slaughtering large numbers of caribou during the spring calving season on a tributary of the Kobuk River; but a few months after the meeting the Regional Director of that Service reported sadly:

"We have found this much—these people generally will agree with us at such meetings that some conservation is necessary, and that they should do their share toward protecting the wildlife. We have also found that 2 days later, if we are no longer there, they are right back in the same pursuit of the caribou as they were 2 days before we arrived. In other words, their concept of conservation is simply stated thus, 'Kill him today; tomorrow he may be gone'. That is not said in a critical vein, because some of these people are very close to me. I think a lot of them, and I have spent a lot of time in the woods with them which other people have not. But they do not have conservation in their make-up, and there is no use for us to kid ourselves with the idea that they are going to protect wildlife voluntarily." (U.S. Dept. Int. 1949, p. 9).

Most of the reindeer herds roamed uncontrolled after their Eskimo herders had abandoned them and sought wage-employment at military establishments. Like the caribou, they too decreased in numbers, mainly because they could no longer secure enough food on their overgrazed ranges. Only on Nunivak Island, which harboured no wolves to molest them, did they thrive and multiply; yet even there the overgrazing became so serious that in 1945 a government biologist who inspected the island's herds recommended their speedy reduction

from 22,000 head to 5,000. The strife between Eskimo and white reindeer-owners had ended in 1939-40, after the federal government had bought out all the whites, distributed some of their deer to the natives, and retained the rest, partly for seed and partly for future distribution. But although the earlier cause for dissension had disappeared, and profitable wage-employment hardly existed near most of their settlements, few of the Eskimos who returned home after their war-time stints showed any inclination to resume the arduous life of reindeer herding; and those who did take it up again sometimes paid less attention to their deer than to the trap-lines they laid out for marauding wolves: for the territorial government was offering a bounty of \$50 on every destroyed wolf, and there were Eskimo trappers, shrewder conservationists than pest-controllers, who counted on killing ten or twelve wolves each year while still allowing a few animals to roam free and propagate. The Bureau of Indian Affairs—to which the territorial government had surrendered control of the reindeer industry as soon as it became once again a purely native enterprise—tried to re-awaken the Eskimos' interest in herding by introducing a reindeer-repayment system patterned after a cattle-repayment system in the United States. Under this program it offered to lend any responsible native 500 reindeer from its 'revolving pool', and to subsidize him until his herd increased to 1,000 or 1,200 head, when he would begin to repay the loan in kind. But recovery was very slow. A count in the summer of 1949 registered only 27,920 reindeer in the whole of Alaska, and of that number 5,600 were held on Atka and Umnak islands in the Aleutian Archipelago, and on Kodiak Island in the Gulf of Alaska: the government still owned 12,350 of the deer; the rest, 15,570, were in native hands (Lantis, 1952b, p. 143). A year later we learn that only a very small minority of the reindeer-owners were close-herding their animals, or hiring others to close-herd them; and perhaps not more than a hundred families looked to the reindeer as their main support. The bright promise of the industry's earlier years had dimmed, and whether it would light up again, or fade entirely, lay concealed by the mist that hides the future.

Today, as at the end of the nineteenth century when Sheldon Jackson introduced the reindeer, the great majority of the Alaskan Eskimos still rely on fishing and hunting to supply most of their daily bread, and on trapping to furnish most of their small cash income. Sea mammal hunting, particularly sealing, dominates the economy of St. Lawrence Island and the area from Bering Strait northward; fishing, especially of salmon, is pre-eminent on the lower waters of the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers and in Bristol Bay. In this latter area, and also farther to the south and east, the runs of salmon were sensibly diminishing during the 1940's, probably through over-exploitation by fishing companies operating out of San Francisco and Seattle. Fishermen and processors, however, blamed the hair seals, which they declared had become more plentiful and were ravaging the salmon shoals. Thereupon the territorial government offered a bounty of \$3 on every hair seal killed in the Gulf of Alaska west of Seward; and when this produced no visible effect it raised the amount to \$6 and extended the offer to the whole coastline of Alaska. How far it swelled the toll of seals is unknown. In any case it failed to save the salmon; for in 1953 the run was so small that President Eisenhower declared southeast Alaska and Bristol Bay a 'disaster area', and set in motion a large program of public works and surplus-food distribution to relieve the distress

of its inhabitants, both white and native. Throughout the whole of northern Alaska, indeed, not in the Bristol Bay and Yukon delta alone, there has been serious malnutrition for half a century, because the Eskimos have been unable to secure and store enough meat and fish to carry them over the lean months of winter, and therefore have spent a high percentage of their meagre incomes on imported foods, particularly starchy products that do not provide a balanced diet.

The chief source of their earned incomes, as we have seen, is trapping. In most places the white fox supplies nearly all the fur, but in the Yukon and Kuskokwim deltas fox gives way to muskrat, supplemented by occasional beaver, marten, and mink. From place to place, and from district to district, the catch varies widely. In 1949 the village of Shageluk on the Innoko River, a tributary of the Yukon, reported a cash income from trapping and hunting that averaged \$219 for each of its 102 inhabitants, or \$930 for each of its 24 hunters; whereas at Selawik, to the north, with 316 inhabitants, 147 of them hunters, the averages for that same year were only \$257 per hunter and \$120 per inhabitant. A Washington Survey Group that investigated in 1949 the lower Yukon and Kuskokwim area, an expanse of tundra as large as the state of Pennsylvania, summed up the economic situation of that region as follows:

"On all sides—on the mainland, the Aleutian chain, Nunivak Island, Nome, and Kotzebue—poverty, disease, and want are evident in striking contrast to the conditions on St. Paul and St. George Islands [the Pribilof Islands, which are fur-seal reservations]. In the lower Yukon-Kuskokwim area . . . there is only one Alaska Native Service hospital. This is a modern 43-bed structure located at Bethel. . . . This hospital must accommodate the natives from 72 villages and a total population of some 7,000. The doctor in charge estimated the tuberculosis incidence as ranging from 15 to 33 percent in the various communities. Almost the sole cash income of these people comes from trapping, and it was locally estimated that this would average about \$400 per year per trapper. Some additional wages are earned by those who work in the Bristol Bay fishery, but even with this, a total income exceeding \$2,000 per year is out of the ordinary.

"A similar standard of living is found in the Nome and Kotzebue areas, as well as on Nunivak Island. The bulk of these people obtain their meats by killing seals, some walrus, and reindeer, caribou, and waterfowl, and use fish extensively for both human consumption and for dog food.

"Housing in most instances in this vast region still consists of small cabins and underground barabaras, where crowded conditions and unbalanced diets lead to tuberculosis, skin diseases, and ailments of the eyes." (U.S. Dept. Int. 1949, p. 74).

Lightering work at Nome, Kotzebue, and Barrow during the brief summer continues to add substantially to the trapping incomes of the Eskimos, and bounties on hair seals, eagles, wolves, and coyotes have brought a trickle of money into their homes. The territorial government set aside \$200,000 in 1951 to cover all bounties for that year and the next, but an unknown percentage of the money went to white hunters. During the 1940's some Eskimos opened a coal mine on the Meade River not far from Barrow, and others tried panning for gold on the Seward Peninsula. Still others, with horizons widened by the recent war, availed themselves of the new airways to wander farther afield, and are employed as skilled or unskilled labourers today in the canneries around the Gulf of Alaska, as well as in Nome, Anchorage, and other towns. A few Eskimo girls have received the full training of nurses; a few Eskimo men have become expert carpenters, plumbers, and mechanics, and at least four are fully qualified pilots, of whom one owns and operates three aircraft on an established

airline. The economy of northern Alaska is extremely haphazard and hazardous. Nevertheless the voluntary exodus of some better-educated and more adventurous Eskimos from their poverty-stricken arctic settlements to wealthier and more opportunity laden regions farther south and east holds great promise for the future, and may well point the way to their salvation as a race.¹ It requires however, both promotion and organization, neither of which the natives themselves are able to provide at the present time.

This brief survey of modern Eskimo cash economy has not mentioned a relatively minor money-producer, handicrafts, which enjoyed a flourishing market among the troops who were stationed in Alaska, but slumped when the troops returned south. Thus whereas the Arts and Crafts Board of the Bureau of Indian Affairs registered sales to the value of \$420,200 in 1944, a year later it registered only \$263,582, which included \$35,504 contributed by the Nome Skin Sewers Cooperative Association. These official figures, however, are rather deceptive, because they cover the whole of Alaska, the Indian regions in the panhandle as well as the Eskimo area farther north; and they take into account only sales that passed through the hands of the Board or its agents, which may have represented no more than half the total. In 1949 the Bureau of Indian Affairs was disturbed by the quantities of fresh walrus ivory that were seeping from Alaska into Seattle craft shops and being converted there into 'Eskimo' curios by non-Eskimo (?) workers; but soon afterwards the authorities prohibited the export of fresh walrus ivory, and they tightened their control over both native and white hunters in the interest of walrus conservation. An official who visited Nunivak Island in 1949 noticed that its Eskimos were weaving exceedingly fine baskets for the tourist trade, and also carving walrus-head buttons of ivory for ladies' dresses, along with other attractive figurines slightly different from those that were being produced elsewhere. Clearly, some at least of the natives still retained their old artistry and originality.

The vicissitudes of a new craft industry illustrate some of the difficulties such enterprises encounter. In 1948 the Bureau of Indian Affairs apprenticed seven Eskimos to William Spratling, a goldsmith and silversmith at the art centre of Taxco, Mexico, in the hope that they would subsequently use some nephrite ("jade") deposits in the Kobuk region of arctic Alaska to develop an Eskimo jewelry industry, similar to the turquoise industry of the Navaho Indians in the southwest United States. Three years afterwards the Bureau launched the industry at Shungnak with a capital of \$300, and sold \$2,000 worth of jade jewelry from the first season's operations. Thereupon it organized branches at two other places in the same area, Kotzebue and Noorvik; and to promote still further the jade and other handicrafts, it set up a clearing house in Juneau, the "Alaska Native Arts and Crafts Association", which did a gross business in 1952 of \$154,932. By the close of that year numerous articles certified "Genuine Eskimo-Indian Arts and Crafts" were being exposed for sale in several shops across the United States, as well as at the Indian Craft shop in the Department of the Interior building in Washington. Almost immediately, however,

¹VanStone (1960, p. 178) estimated that between 1948 and 1955 increased summer employment in Fairbanks, Nome, and elsewhere raised the annual income of half the families in Point Hope village from \$500-\$800 to over \$1,000.

they encountered the same competition from foreign imitations as had plagued the Eskimo-handicraft market in Seattle at the beginning of the century; and this competition no use of official trademarks has ever been able to overcome.

There can be no doubt that the handicraft industry has never occupied more than a very subordinate place in the totality of Eskimo economy. Even in its best years northern Alaskan sales probably averaged no more than \$200,000, which for a population of 16,000 represents an income of only \$12.50 per head. Nor can we reasonably expect any marked expansion. The industry will always remain an infant financially, even when the tourist traffic doubles its present volume.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to dismiss it as an insignificant enterprise, especially now when the economy of the entire state of Alaska has reached a cross-road and the future path of its Eskimo population is still uncharted. Just as every added twig increases the strength of a bundle, so every occupation that brings in even a tiny income increases the economic resources of an impoverished people, provided that it does not impinge too greatly on time that might be used for more rewarding occupations. What is still more important, it greatly strengthens the morale of any people that stands, as the Eskimos of both Alaska and Canada stand today, balanced between survival and extinction.

Income earned by handicraft work, therefore, falls into a very different category from the unearned income distributed under the welfare programs that were operated in earlier years by the federal government, but now by the state government with assistance from Washington. So unpredictable are life's vicissitudes that some kind of welfare program may be necessary in every society, even the most opulent, if human beings are to escape needless hardships and privations; but in Eskimo Alaska, as in other depressed areas whose inhabitants, from geographical and other causes, must rest content with a living standard lower than the average standard in Europe and the United States, unearned subsidies not carefully administered can quickly sap the energy of large segments of population, and demoralize entire communities. We have seen this happen on a large scale in the refugee camps of Europe and Asia; and there have been signs that it may be happening in Alaska also—that old age pensions, children's allowances, and other subventions may be raising the rate of illegitimacy and making the natives less industrious. Three eminent United States anthropologists who have spent many seasons in Alaska thus summarized in conversation the present-day conditions of its Eskimos:

Kuskokwim and Lower Yukon rivers: The natives are undernourished and suffer greatly from tuberculosis. Although they catch many fish and store them away for the winter the supply is inadequate. No work for wages is available; the people are kept alive by social security payments.

Kotzebue and other places (excluding Barrow) north of Bering Strait: Most of the natives are idle because they can find little employment. Government subsidies to the old help to support the young. The morale of the population is very low.

A school-teacher's letter written in May 1960 from a village in the Kotzebue zone high-lights the situation in that area. It reads:

"M — has no sons, but six daughters, five of whom have 'fatherless' children. He receives for each child \$42 monthly. So he sits at home and waits for the mail plane that brings him the money."

After the recent world war thousands of idle men lounged from morning to night in the public squares of every Italian town south of Naples, unemployed, without hope of employment, and supported only by the dole. Today many of these Mediterraneans whom the writer observed so dejected and demoralized in 1950, transplanted now to Canada, Australia, and other countries, are proving themselves skilful and industrious workers, are strengthening the economies of their adopted lands, and are contentedly building new homes for themselves and their families. This should remind us that in our modern world, where social and economic drift may be even more fatal than political drift, courage, planning, and goodwill can harvest happiness where earlier there was only misery. If the morale of Alaska's Eskimos is low today, yet it is still unbroken; if their villages are squalid and full of suffering, yet they still shelter hope. We know that it lies within the power of the United States to rehabilitate these hardy citizens on its northern frontier. We dare not question that it possesses the will.

Eskimo health

After Alaska in 1912 received the status of a territory, its governor acted as Commissioner of Health until the local legislature in 1919 made the Commissionership a separate office, and appointed a physician to fill it on a part-time basis. The legislature voted the new Commissioner, however, practically no funds, so that his position remained almost a sinecure until 1936, when the federal Security Act provided grants-in-aid to the territorial government for the setting up of four units, one to deal with communicable diseases, one with maternal and child health, a third with public-health engineering, and a fourth with public-health laboratories. These four units operated quietly for about ten years, serving the white population only. Then, in 1945, the legislature created a regular Department of Health under a full-time Commissioner, and, a year later, allocated him \$250,000 to take in hand the problem of tuberculosis. It was in that year, 1945, that the territorial government first began to share with the federal authorities the responsibility for Eskimo welfare.

Throughout the war, therefore, the Alaska Native Service of the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs methodically carried on the same health program it had inherited from the Bureau of Education. To the degree that its funds permitted — and Congress was increasing them from year to year until in 1954 they totalled about \$8,000,000, of which the health section received two-thirds — it provided a staff of doctors and nurses to treat sick Eskimos, both in their own villages and in the half-dozen hospitals that it maintained in strategic centres; and it contracted with non-governmental doctors and hospitals to care for other Eskimos not reached by its own staff. Without doubt this staff was as competent and dedicated as similar staffs in other regions of the world; and it rendered services to the Eskimos greater than money could measure. Viewed in broad perspective, however, the entire health program of the Alaska Native Service amounted to no more than a gigantic 'hold-the-line' operation — a valiant effort to check the losses from diseases that had already attacked the natives, without attempting any counter-assault to destroy the bases of those diseases and prevent further attacks. In other words, the federal government struggled bravely to heal the already sick; but it completely neglected the malnutrition

in Eskimo homes, the inadequate housing, and the lack of sanitation that provided fertile breeding-grounds for many of their most virulent ailments.

"The explosiveness and rapid extension of even minor infectious diseases are reflected in high mortality, and, in turn, reflect the lack of immunity, overcrowding, poor hygiene and nutrition, and inadequate health care which characterizes Native Alaska." (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 3, p. 6).

It seems highly unlikely that either inadequate funds or inadequate planning imposed this policy on the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Probably it assumed that housing, sanitary engineering, immunization, and other aspects of the health problem were not functions of the federal government, but of the territorial, and therefore lay outside its competence. It was with these public health aspects, in fact, that the Department of Health set up by the territorial government in 1945 mainly concerned itself. Only for certain categories, notably the crippled and the tuberculous, did it provide any direct medical care.

The Second World War, and the subsequent war in Korea, revealed the ineffectiveness of the federal government's restricted health policy, and the breach it left open in Alaska's defences. Half the Eskimo youths who presented themselves for military service — the cream of the people — had to be discharged as physically unfit! In his letter to the Department of Health, 12 March 1954, Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson wrote:

"When these scout battalions were initially organized, about 1300 Eskimos applied. Approximately 40 percent were rejected as being physically unfit at the time of application. Of those whose applications seemed acceptable, 120 more were physically disqualified. Most of the above were disqualified because of tuberculosis. . . .

"It is appalling to note that at each encampment approximately 10 percent are found to have active tuberculosis. These are men who were uninfected at the time they were accepted in the Alaska scouts. This obviously is wasteful and makes serious inroads on the defense potential in this area." (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 4, p. 54).¹

Four months earlier Col. J. E. O'Malley, reporting to the Adjutant General of the Alaska National Guard on the X-ray chest films of Eskimo Scout members, declared:

"The result of this survey from a military standpoint or the standpoint of national defense gives us some shocking information concerning the physical fitness of most valuable groups of citizens of Alaska. These individuals whom we examined constitute the most alert, most intelligent, most patriotic people living in this section of the country. Their services in a time of emergency would be most valuable. However, it is easily seen that the employment of native troops with such a high rate of tuberculous infection would be most hazardous for any supporting groups with which they might come in contact." (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 4, p. 55).

Throughout the war the army provided medical and dental care to all Eskimos enrolled in the armed forces, or working in army camps; and the doctors and nurses of the Alaska Native Service continued to treat other

¹Alaska's first Commissioner of Health, Dr. C. Earl Albrecht, (today Deputy Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania), writes: "The Eskimo, when his health was improved and the toxic effects of active tuberculosis were reduced, became a different type of person. This is nothing unusual but in this instance it was most dramatic. Those of us who served in the Armed Forces in Alaska discovered that the Eskimo was a superior soldier. He was reliable, hard working, and endeavoured to achieve. The competition for ratings as determined by inspection invariably led to superior ratings by the army inspectors. The regrettable situation was that their health was so poor, and they were so riddled with tuberculosis, that they could not demonstrate their real ability."

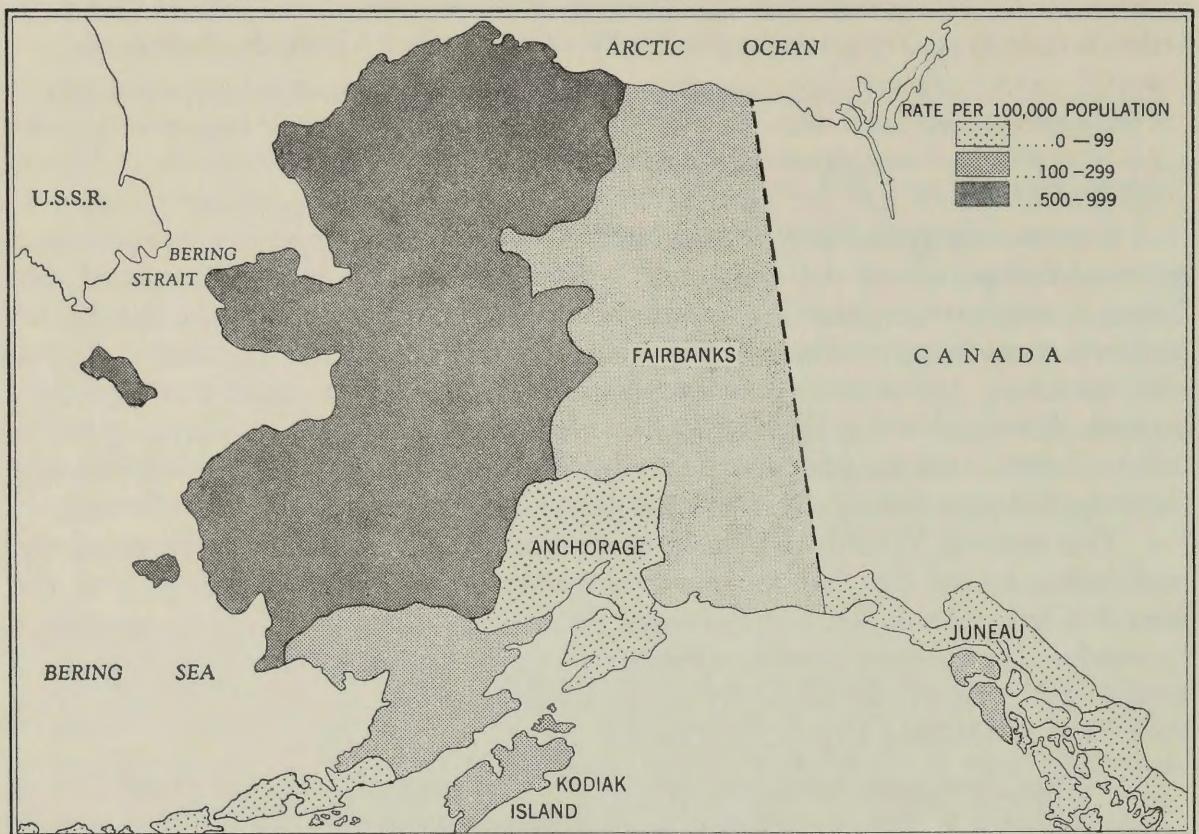


Fig. 2. Tuberculosis deaths Alaska, 1950. (Reproduced from 'Alaska's Health', 1954, University of Pittsburgh, Fig. 8). Note no records were taken in the 300-499 category.

Eskimos in its six small hospitals at Barrow, Kotzebue, Tanana, Bethel, Kana-kanak, and Juneau. The conflict revealed that tuberculosis, though largely confined to the natives, constituted by far the most serious health problem facing the entire territory. After hostilities had ended, therefore, the military authorities turned over a surplus hospital at Seward to the territorial government, and a larger 200-bed hospital at Mount Edgecumbe, near Sitka, to the Alaska Native Service, both to be converted into sanatoria for tuberculosis patients. In 1947 the newly created Territorial Department of Health fitted out three small vessels with medical, dental, and nursing personnel and supplies, including X-ray apparatus and immunization equipment; with one it organized a medical service to the Aleutian chain of islands, with the second a service to villages in the Bering Sea not reached by the revenue steamer, and with the third a service on the Yukon River similar to that which the old Alaska Division of the Bureau of Education, and its successor the Alaska Native Service, had provided prior to the war. In this same year 1947 some specialists from the American Medical Association who had visited Alaska to study its health situation strongly recommended to the federal government, among other measures, the use of BCG vaccine to combat the everywhere prevalent tuberculosis.

Pressure from many sources thus forced the Alaska Native Service to revise its earlier health (and educational) policies, and to coordinate its activities more closely with those of the territorial government and other organizations. It expanded its contract agreements with outside hospitals and doctors by arranging that 15 out of the 16 non-native hospitals in Alaska, and numerous physicians in Nome, Fairbanks, Unalakleet, and other places, should accept Eskimo

patients and charge their expenses to the federal government. It stationed an itinerant public health nurse at each of three Eskimo centres: Kotzebue, Nome, and Unalakleet; and it agreed to pay half, in some cases all, the cost of eleven nursing stations which the territorial Department of Health undertook to set up in other communities. The sterling work these nurses performed fully merited the following tribute from a health team of the University of Pittsburgh:

"Public health nurses throughout the Territory are doing a conscientious job of immunizing the population against smallpox, diphtheria, whooping cough and typhoid. . . .

"Despite efforts of these few nurses to do essentially preventive and educational work, in keeping with traditional concepts of public health nursing, they are in fact largely preoccupied with urgent matters of elementary medical care.

"Except for the few scattered hospitals in the area operated by either the ANS or church missions, these devoted nurses and ANS teachers bear the brunt of responsibility for total health care that the villages receive." (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 6, p. 42; chap. 4, p. 32).

Federal and territorial authorities were slowly awakening to the magnitude of the native health problem, but the efforts of both were still too feeble. Complaints of governmental neglect seeped into Washington unendingly, and inter-service rivalries within the federal capital itself so complicated the confused issues, that in 1949 the Secretary of the Interior designated a Survey Group to study living conditions and human problems on the Pribilof Islands and among the Eskimo communities around the Bering Sea. The Group consisted of two senior officials of his Department, and two special consultants from outside it; and it submitted a clear and forceful account of the wretched economic conditions in the Bering Sea area (but not on the Pribilof Islands), and their disastrous effect on the health of the Eskimos. Its recommendations, on the other hand, were vague, innocuous, and deeply disappointing. It urged:

1. An improvement in the general living conditions of the natives, i.e., in housing, community development, social and recreational life, education, health, and economic opportunities, along the lines of a 6-year program recommended by the Alaska Committee of the Department of the Interior.
2. The preaching of wildlife conservation and management by school-teachers, game officials, and missionaries.
3. The enforcement by the territorial government of all existing liquor laws, because the most deplorable conditions among the natives exist in those communities and villages where liquor is available.
4. Continuing and accelerated support for the programs of the Alaska Native Service, the Alaska Department of Health, the Territorial Commissioner of Education, and all other groups and organizations, public and private, that are striving to improve the standards of living for the native peoples who constitute about one-third of the total population of the Territory. (U.S. Dept. Int. 1949, p. 75).

The Secretary of the Interior who studied these four recommendations surely felt that they might have been summed up in four words "No major changes needed".

Nevertheless, a few not unimportant changes did occur during the five years following. The Alaska Native Service and the Alaska Department of Health began to work more closely together, especially in the fight against tuberculosis through the use of BCG vaccine and other weapons; and the mortality rate of this plague, if we dare trust the figures, dropped from 841 per 100,000 in 1943 to 673 in 1950 and 625 in 1951 (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 3, p. 13). A nationally known orthopaedic surgeon brought fresh

hope to the children crippled by disease; a new 400-bed hospital, for natives only, opened its doors at Anchorage in 1953 and joined in the tuberculosis battle; and modest housing programs in a number of villages from Point Barrow in the far north to the lower mouth of the Yukon River moved a small percentage of Eskimos out of their unhealthy, log-and-sod huts, and in one village at least claimed to have reduced by 80 per cent the rate of infant mortality.¹ With growing knowledge of the conditions in northern Alaska the conscience of the American people was stirring.

It was the publication in 1954 of the grim report on Eskimo health compiled by a team of investigators from the University of Pittsburgh that finally aroused the federal government to come to grips with the situation. An opening page in that report trumpeted this arresting statement:

"the indigenous peoples of Native [i.e., Eskimo] Alaska are the victims of sickness, crippling conditions and premature death to a degree exceeded in very few parts of the world." (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 1, p. 2).

Later pages presented the details, summed up in one passage thus:

"Here in Native [i.e., Eskimo] Alaska, public health problems are nearly out of hand, and it is for this area that the ADH [Alaska Department of Health] is most poorly equipped in organization and service, to deal with the most urgent health problems of the Territory. Here are found over 90 percent of Alaska's tuberculosis deaths; here more than 10 percent of all infants die during the first year of life. Here is almost universal prevalence of serious dental disease, the great bulk of the Territory's nutritional deficiency, the vast majority of its crippled children, and the heaviest concentration of people with serious hearing and vision defects. Here there is almost complete absence even of elementary sanitation." (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 4, p. 32).²

The Pittsburgh team believed that tuberculosis could be reasonably well controlled within ten years if the government immediately applied, and maintained without interruption, the standard control measures accepted by all civilized countries — modifying them only in so far as was necessary to meet Alaska's peculiar geographical and economic conditions. But it pointed out, as had earlier investigators, that the health of the Eskimos required much more than hospitalization and medical care, that the housing was deplorable almost everywhere, and malnutrition widely spread.

"Adequately nourish and house the native, and, in a generation, the need for the maintenance of hundreds of expensive beds for tuberculosis will, in all probability, vanish." (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 6, p. 43).

It advocated, accordingly, two measures: (1) a realistic program of housing, realistic in terms of design, construction, and costs of maintenance, and (2) the free distribution of substantial amounts of surplus food, an emergency measure to be evaluated and reconsidered at the end of three years, since relief "is not a substitute for a sound economy". Preferably the food was to be exchanged for work on community projects. Much of the ill-health of the natives, it stressed, stemmed from their poverty, and their health standards should rise in

¹Letter from Mr. M. G. Gebhart, Executive Director, Alaska State Housing Authority, 4 August 1960, to Mr. B. G. Sivertz, Canadian Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources.

²"The native [i.e., Alaska's Indians and Eskimos combined] infant death rate in 1950 was a phenomenal 101 deaths per 1,000 live births under one year of age." (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 3, p. 3).

proportion to the security of their economic base and the medical care that was provided them. (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, *passim*, but especially chap. 6, p. 43 and chap. 7, pp. 5-6).

On 1 July 1955, less than a year after the publication of the University of Pittsburgh report, the United States Public Health Service assumed all the health functions previously performed by the Alaska Native Service of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This event may well prove a milestone in the medical history of native Alaska. Yet we must not expect a miracle overnight. Perhaps in 1964, ten years after its first report, the University of Pittsburgh, with the blessing of both Washington and Juneau, will again send to Alaska a medical team which, in a second report, will weigh the successes and the failures of the health programs of the federal and state governments during the interval, and will also advise them on future strategy.

Post-war housing programs

It is not clear whether the Pittsburgh investigators, before recommending a "realistic program of housing for the native: realistic in terms of design, construction and costs of maintenance" (Alaska Health Survey Team, 1954, chap. 6, p. 43), had studied the housing activities of the Navy Department at Point Barrow around the middle of the century, or the Alaska Housing Authority's loan program during the same period. The Navy, which had hired up to eighty Point Barrow Eskimos in 1946 to unload its supply vessels and to freight their cargo to various depots, wished to use them on larger operations connected with its oil explorations in the neighbourhood. In view of the prevalent tuberculosis, however, it determined to improve their health and living conditions, not merely to increase their efficiency, but also to shield the white workers with whom they would come into contact and to avoid the risk of heavy claims for compensation from employees who might contract the disease. In cooperation with the Alaska Native Service, therefore, it lent the Eskimos a number of tractors and other equipment so that they might drive streets through their village and install a simple sanitary system; and it brought them from Seattle, free of charge, sufficient building material for them to remodel their old homes and construct new ones. The Eskimos responded enthusiastically, as well they might, for many of the men were earning the same wages as the whites — some as much as \$5,800 yearly; and the women too were profiting from the clamorous market for fur clothing that had opened suddenly, and as it seemed miraculously, right at their doors. So by the summer of 1952 the villagers had erected, or remodelled, no fewer than 99 well-insulated homes; and they added to this number the following year. When therefore the Navy finally completed its program and shipped out its equipment, it could observe with satisfaction that:

"A well laid out native town has emerged on the Arctic Coast. Many business and civic enterprises have been developed by the Eskimos. These include five general stores, two coffee shops, one dance hall, two motion picture theatres, one community hall and one beauty shop all operated by Eskimos. Since 1946, the native population has increased about 60%. It is believed that the vital statistics indicate that living conditions are improving. In 1946 there were 49 births and 32 deaths from disease in the Village of Barrow. In 1951, there were 71 births and 17 deaths. The death rate has decreased and the birth rate is perceptibly rising." (Roberts, 1952, p. 9).

The Alaska Housing Authority's program in the Bering Sea area had no connection with the development of any natural resource such as oil, or with any wage-employment program. It was a straightforward attempt by the federal government to improve the housing, and thereby also the health of the Eskimos, especially in the wet tundra region around the mouth of the Yukon River where tuberculosis had become endemic. Congress had authorized this housing project in 1949, allocated for it a revolving sum of one million dollars, and created a special organization, called the Alaska Housing Authority, to administer it. Any Eskimo could borrow from the Authority, without collateral, up to \$500, an amount that would supply the material for a 14-foot x 18-foot shell of shiplap, with an aluminum roof, and rough fiber-board insulation to cover the four walls, ceiling, and floor. The borrower constructed the unit himself, providing for it a foundation, doors, building-paper, and whatever else he considered necessary. At no time did he receive any cash. Whether he borrowed the maximum sum of \$500 to erect an entirely new dwelling, or a lesser sum to renovate his old home, the Housing Authority bought him the semi-pre-cut materials up to the amount of the loan, delivered them at the building site, and left him to decide for himself the use he would make of them.

The program got under way in 1950 and ended in 1952, when the Housing Authority ceased to make any new loans, although repayments on old loans still (1960) continue to come in. During the three mid-century years it helped to erect, or improve, approximately 550 house units in 30 villages, at a cost of roughly \$450,000, excluding overhead (Alaska Housing Authority, 1957-8, p. 29). The Eskimos duly repaid \$295,950, which is about two-thirds of the amount they had borrowed; and the Authority expected to write off the remaining \$155,000 as uncollectable:¹ for while many of the natives had fulfilled their obligations to the exact letter of their agreements, others for various reasons had made only partial repayments, or no repayments at all.

From a purely financial standpoint, then, the Housing Authority's program was far from successful. It had not taken into account the migratory habits of most Eskimos, or their very low incomes. Even at the outset, however, the Authority had not considered it a strictly commercial undertaking.

"The remote dwelling program was considered a crash project by the Alaska Housing Authority to help move the natives out of their mud and sod barabaras. The natives in the areas in which the program was concentrated had the highest incident rate of tuberculosis in the world. It was felt that any improvement in housing which would achieve dryness in the home would be a major weapon in combating the TB rate." (Alaska Housing Authority, 1957-8, p. 29).

Viewing it from this larger standpoint, we must certainly agree with the director of the Authority that the project was "well worth the effort".

From a larger viewpoint still, however, the Navy's program at Point Barrow and the Housing Authority's in the Bering Sea, both possessed the same weakness, a weakness that has characterized many slum-clearing projects in other parts of the world. They did not alleviate permanently the extreme poverty that was the main cause of the poor housing, the malnutrition, and the ill-health; nor did they check the growth of new slums to take the place of

¹Letter from Mr. M. G. Gebhart, 4 August 1960, to Mr. B. G. Sivertz, in library Canadian Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources.

the old ones. It is true that the Navy had paid high wages at Point Barrow, but its work had been of brief duration, and had left behind very few further opportunities for wage-employment. This the Navy had foreseen, and had therefore encouraged its employees to keep up their old skills in hunting and fishing by allowing them time off without pay for those pursuits. But hunting and fishing brought in little or no cash; they could not even furnish an adequate supply of food for every month of the year: and when fur prices cascaded trapping too brought in only insignificant returns. Bearing in mind that in the district of Point Barrow high freight charges raise by 50 to 100 per cent the prices of all imported goods,¹ from a tin of beans or a sack of flour to an axe or a rifle; that the arctic climate, and the perennially frozen ground, render the installation of any running-water system so expensive as to be virtually prohibitive except to government-supported hospitals and similar institutions; that the average family cannot earn today by trapping more than \$500 yearly, and that it probably receives more than this amount from social security hand-outs to keep it from starvation; remembering all this, we may fairly ask how long natives will maintain a high morale and keep their streets and homes sanitary and tidy, when their bodies are imperfectly nourished and the best meal some of their children receive is the daily free lunch in the village school.

Let us glance at what actually happened during the 1940's in another area, St. Lawrence Island, where white foxes are more numerous than in most parts of the Arctic. During the years when fox furs brought high prices some Eskimos in the village of Gambell imported at their own charge considerable quantities of lumber, and built good two-storey homes of two, three, and four rooms, equipped with electrical appliances like the homes of white traders, school-teachers, and missionaries. Then times changed: incomes declined and costs increased. If you should visit one of these homes during the winter, reported the General Superintendent of the Alaska Native Service in 1949, you would find three and four people confined to a little 2-foot x 4-foot cubicle with no furniture, and no heat other than the feeble amount supplied by a gas or seal-oil lamp: the other rooms of the house would be closed off and unoccupied, because its owners could not afford the fuel necessary to heat them (U.S. Dept. Int. 1949, pp. 23-4). It was not a case of sheer conservatism, or ignorance, as with the working class Englishman 50 years ago who filled the tub in his newly installed bathroom with coal and continued, like his forebears, to wash in the kitchen. The Eskimo owners of these new houses at Gambell occupied every room during the brief summer. But when winter came they faced two choices: they could either freeze to death, singly, in the 30°F below-zero air of their sanitary bedrooms, or they could huddle together in one small room, unsanitary but comfortably warm. Naturally they preferred to survive in the small but sociable room, even though one member of the family might be dying of tuberculosis.

We who live in more southern lands do not always realize how greatly life in the Arctic is conditioned by the climate. Some countries can quarantine the tuberculous in separate huts outside their homes, where their families care for them, and nurses and doctors on circuit visit them at more or less regular

¹"A survey of consumer prices made in August-September 1958, using Seattle prices for 1958 as the base, revealed a steady upward rise in the index the farther north the cities were located, starting at 119.6 at Ketchikan and rising to 149.9 at Nome" (Rogers, 1960, p. 65).

intervals. This treatment works admirably with the Maori population of Hawkes Bay, in the North Island of New Zealand, where the thermometer rarely falls below 40°F and a hut needs no heat even in midwinter; but in arctic Alaska, where the average Eskimo family finds it both difficult and expensive to warm its home during the dark days and bitter gales of the long cold winter, a sick person living nearby in solitude, however loved, would undergo great hardship and strain, psychological even more than physical; and he would need unusual fortitude of mind and body to survive.

Let us now turn aside for a moment and examine an Eskimo trident or fish-spear. Its three bone or antler prongs are fastened together at their butts, and each is bound securely to the end of the long wooden handle. Thus the weapon consists of four easily separable parts which the cohesive force of strong lashings converts into a single unit. A cohesive force of another kind similarly binds together Eskimo housing, Eskimo diet, and Eskimo health, and links all three with Eskimo incomes. For it is the excessive lowness of these incomes, more than ignorance or any other factor, that produces today's inadequate diet and miserable housing; and the latter in turn are the principal causes of the prevailing malnutrition and ill-health.

It was not always so. There was a time, before we Europeans reached arctic Alaska and introduced a wage economy and the use of money, when the Eskimos did not experience our virus and fungus diseases—smallpox, measles, syphilis, influenza, tuberculosis, and the rest; and their teeth, though often worn down to the gums by hard usage, were never pitted by caries or dental decay. Although by our standards the semi-underground wood-and-sod houses of those days were as miserably uncomfortable as they are today, they were not yet the breeders of infectious diseases that they have become since we first visited them; and they provided, and still provide, good shelter even in the coldest weather. Eskimo diet two hundred years ago, when it was limited practically to meat and fish, would have seemed extremely monotonous to our pampered tastes (though not to the tastes of our ancestors); yet it supplied virtually all the nourishment that was needed for good health, without the starches and sugars that now ruin most of the natives' teeth—and our own.

Of course there was a rougher face to the coin; periods of dire starvation when the hunting and fishing failed, when little children and old people gave up the struggle and died, while strong men and women clung desperately to life by chewing their sealskin bow-cases and the tough leather of their boots. Starvation, infanticide, the hazards of the chase on sea and land, these and other factors produced so high a mortality that the population remained small and presumably stationary. Nevertheless, the pre-European Eskimos were healthy, and, if we may judge from their eastern cousins in northern Canada half a century ago, cheerful and relatively contented—far more contented, I believe, than their present-day descendants, or their white fellow countrymen whose restless civilization, with its *mélange* of virtues and vices, they are slowly learning to assimilate.

Future of Alaskan Eskimos

The river of human life and culture flows on without pause, and the individual man cannot arrest it short of destroying the whole race with bombs or poison gas. He cannot turn back the river; he cannot recall the past, or undo

what he has done already. But to some degree he can and does direct and shape his future. In northern Alaska the United States cannot restore the Eskimos to their stone-age condition, even if that were desirable; but it is rich and powerful enough to equalize their living standard with that of sailors and transport workers on the Pacific seaboard, of miners in the coalfields of West Virginia, or of immigrant Poles and Italians in the automobile factories of Detroit. The total number of Alaskan Eskimos (excluding the Aleuts) hardly exceeds 16,000, and shows as yet few signs of increasing. If not more than a quarter of them could earn the wages of unskilled labourers in Pennsylvanian mills, or in the cotton fields of the deep south, they could quickly improve their diet and their housing, and within a few years remove, or at least greatly mitigate, the scourge of tuberculosis that today, like a sword of Damocles, overhangs every man, woman, and child along the north Alaskan coast.

At the present time, however, it is not possible for many of them to earn those wages in their own homeland, and whether it ever will be possible is not yet clear; for we lack sufficient knowledge of the strategic requirements of the area, and of its natural resources. In the past it has yielded, in addition to gold, small amounts of tin, tungsten, and coal; and prospectors may some day uncover larger and richer deposits of these and other minerals. The Arctic Slope of Alaska contains resources of both oil and gas, but the day when they can be exploited commercially is not yet in sight: in any case an operating oilfield gives little employment unless related industries can be developed around it. Then there are the salmon fisheries in Bristol Bay and eastward, which unhappily are shrinking rather than expanding: and the fur-seal industry on the Pribilof Islands, now stabilized at about its present level. On land the reindeer herds may increase considerably, but we have learned that although they may serve the local markets, they will never give rise to the great meat-export industry that fired the imaginations of the Lomans. A larger number of Eskimos than today may find employment in the communication and transportation services—on the airfields and the weather stations, the highways, and the railroads, the coastal vessels and the shipping that plies between Alaska and the Pacific coast of the United States. But after all of these have taken their quota of Eskimo manpower, a high percentage of the natives will still remain jobless; and they must either migrate to the panhandle and farther south to earn a living wage, or else continue today's heart-breaking struggle to provide themselves and their families with the barest necessities of life through the old-time pursuits of hunting, fishing, and trapping, and resignedly trust to social security payments and services to keep their heads above the drowning level.

Reason shrinks from this second alternative. Eskimo health and welfare have for many years imposed unduly heavy loads on both the federal and the state governments; and the state especially cannot afford to carry them indefinitely, for they are crippling its finances and gravely menacing its growth. As for the Eskimos themselves, the crushing of all hope of escape from their present desperate plight would deepen their misery, increase their demoralization, and bring about their speedy extinction. Any perpetuation of today's almost sub-human economy in northern Alaska is therefore unthinkable. That way lies madness.

Yet without help it will hardly be possible for the Eskimos to move out of their isolated homeland into the unfamiliar world of commerce and industry, and there fight their way in the employment market. They are brave, hardy,

and patient: without those qualities they could never have survived their arctic environment. But that environment has not made them a self-assertive people. In the south they will have to face and overcome the prejudices of their fellow-citizens, prejudices aroused, not by the Mongolian traits of the Eskimos, but by their low economic status, their visible ignorance of many everyday features of American life, and their inability to speak fluent English—for their schools are giving them today only a feeble smattering of our language. Furthermore, wage-employment in a strange environment will demand from them new skills, new adjustments, and new responsibilities. They will have to accept new values and new relationship-patterns in an employer-employee world dominated in part by trade-unions; and they must cultivate a ceaseless awareness of clocks and a machine-like regularity to conform with a civilization largely governed by machines. The society they will enter will be totally unlike any society they have known in the course of their history. If they are to make the leap into it safely, they will need all the help that their fellow countrymen and government can give them, help similar to that given to European immigrants by reception centres, employment agencies, guidance officers, and the like. That help might even begin before they make the leap south, for a continuous survey could be maintained of present and future employment-openings, and the natives given preliminary training to fit them for those openings.¹

Eskimos are by nature very adaptable, so that most of those who come south to look for work will probably settle down and quickly lose their identity in the mass of their fellow-Americans. Yet some, one hopes, will retain the close ties with their arctic communities that Italian-Americans often retain with their birthplaces in the Mediterranean: for the successful immigrant who preserves a footing in his old world inspires hope and courage in kindred who are still struggling in the homeland, and more than any outsider fortifies them to keep marching steadily ahead.

Barring then the discovery in northern Alaska of resources now unknown, we should both expect and encourage many of the younger Eskimos to break away from their present surroundings and migrate farther south. There, in richer and more populous regions, they will find their own lives richer and more complex than they have ever imagined. But not, on that account, better or more satisfying. That is the chance that they will take—the chance that they will be more unhappy in their new land than they ever were in the old. Fate, however, has given them no choice but to take that chance if they wish to survive, because their arctic stronghold was breached two centuries ago, and ever-faster means of travel and transportation have destroyed their isolation and made them an integral part of our swiftly moving world.

The United States anticipated such a situation as far back as 1884, when it undertook to provide the Eskimos with an education that would “fit them for the social and industrial life of the white population of the United States

¹The Bureau of Indian Affairs recently inaugurated a policy of this kind as an extension to its vocational-training program: it now offers grants of money and other aids to Alaskan Eskimos and Indians who wish to leave their homes and relocate in urban areas where they can obtain permanent employment. In 1958 several families left St. Lawrence Island under this scheme and migrated, some to Fairbanks, some to Seattle, and some to places as far away as Oakland, California, and Chicago (see Hughes, 1960, p. 376). The St. Lawrence Island experiment seems to have failed, but only time will show how successful this policy will be in the future.

and promote their not-too-distant assimilation" (see p. 9). Now that three generations have passed, that undertaking of 1884 should be nearing its fulfilment.

This brings us to our final topic, namely, the present-day education of the Alaskan Eskimos and the contribution it is making to their rapid assimilation.

Eskimo education

The Second World War, like the gold rush of the 1890's, uprooted the Eskimos from their quiet villages and carried them into a tumultuous maelstrom that paid little regard to their individual wishes, but tossed them like driftwood on its boiling waters. Yet at the same time it opened up to them new avenues of activity, and it taught them skills that had no place in the curricula of their high schools at Eklutna, Kanakanak, and White Mountain. More than all else, it ranged them side by side with their fellow-Americans in the common defence of Alaska, and forever swept away the gospel of the "New Dealers" in Washington (see p. 27), that the Eskimos and Indians on this continent could and should be insulated from white Americans, protected like *rarae aves* from dangerous contamination, and encouraged to pursue the even tenor of their lives without interference from, or consideration of, their neighbours. From 1944 onward the most prominent of these "New Dealers" began to vanish from the stage, and the philosophy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs underwent a complete change. It no longer assumed that the majority of Eskimo youths, now that the war had enlarged their horizons and increased their mobility, would contentedly cling to their squalid and opportunity poor villages, eking out a bare subsistence with the help of government doles. On the contrary, it believed that they would go wherever they could find steady wage-employment, and would gradually be absorbed in the general population of the territory.

The Bureau's superintendent in Alaska voiced this new view in 1949:

"At one time our whole emphasis—in fact, when I came here in 1944—was on an educational program that kept the native child in that community. We have seen the futility of that kind of philosophy, and have completely changed our approach to the education problem. We are now setting up a program that will take the boys and girls out of their community, and we don't care if they ever go back at all. In fact, we urge them not to go back because the communities cannot support them. That is the purpose of Mount Edgecumbe at the present time. Of course, we expect to try and train teachers, and we expect to try and train nurses. We are going to do our best to try and get some dentists, and that kind of professional personnel that is needed back in these communities to help alleviate the conditions that are there. But as far as taking this whole number of boys and girls that come out of these communities and expecting them to go back and live, we do not" (U.S. Dept. Int. 1949, p. 22).

This new outlook was indeed revolutionary, and it entailed some revolutionary consequences. First of all, it was obvious that in a fully integrated population separate schools for Indians and Eskimos could have no place. Even in the second decade of this century they had appeared completely irrational to most Alaskans wherever a small group of natives lived and worked in a predominantly white settlement, or, conversely, two or three white families in a definitely native community. The territorial government itself had quietly opposed separate schools in such cases, not merely on account of its always

straightened finances. In village after village it had refused to call on Washington to set up special schools for the small native minorities, schools such as Canada was maintaining in Vancouver, Duncan, and other towns in British Columbia that sheltered a few Indian inhabitants. Instead, it had enrolled with the white pupils first the half-breed children of the communities, then the full-blood, without placing them in separate classes or modifying in any way the regular curriculum (see also p. 21). The symbiosis succeeded. Whatever prejudices may have existed in the early years of the century soon faded away; and long before the Second World War broke out it had become quite misleading to designate the federal and territorial school-systems "native" and "white", because native children constituted a large percentage of the pupils in the territorial schools also. By 1950, indeed, out of Alaska's estimated 11,000 native Indian and Eskimo children of school age, 3,700 were attending territorial schools, 5,400 federal schools, 600 mission schools, and 1,400 no schools at all. At that time federal and territorial schools differed in minor details only, so that teachers could and did transfer without difficulty from one system to the other. The two could readily be amalgamated, therefore, as soon as the federal and territorial governments reached an agreement.

They reached a tentative agreement in 1950, when the Bureau of Indian Affairs, with its new vision of the integration of Eskimos with whites strengthened by a decrease in Congress' appropriation for its Alaskan activities, revoked the Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934, and offered to withdraw entirely from the educational field as soon as the territorial government could take over all its schools; and it proposed a target date of 1960 for the completion of the take-over. This was of course a straight reversal of the policy that the two governments had pursued prior to the war, when the territory, hard pressed financially, had transferred to the jurisdiction of the Bureau nineteen schools in which most of the pupils were natives. Now, however, the territory accepted the new offer, and within two years its Department of Education had taken over all the Bureau's schools in southeastern Alaska, thereby completing the integration of all Indian and white pupils in that part of the country. The transfer of the northern schools proceeded more slowly: by 1955 the Bureau had transferred only 21, and was still operating 2 boarding-schools, 70 day-schools, and 14 "instructional aid" schools, nearly all of them in the Eskimo area. Yet their transfer too, though delayed, was impending; and in 1953 Congress formally set its seal on the change by passing House Concurrent Resolution 108, which sanctioned the gradual elimination of all federal trusteeship in Alaska, and also of the special services which the Bureau of Indian Affairs was providing its natives. The timetable for their final elimination has since gone a little awry, because the State has experienced financial troubles and is seeking heavier subsidies from the federal government. Consequently, in this target year of 1960, the Bureau of Indian Affairs still operates a number of schools in the north, and engages there in other activities. Nevertheless, its days are clearly numbered; and the new State of Alaska will shortly carry on its shoulders full responsibility for the education of all its Indian, Eskimo, and white school-children—an education "without reference to race", as laid down by Alaska's charter, the Organic Act passed by the federal government in 1884.

The amalgamation of the two education systems had been casting its shadow ahead prior to 1950, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs had prepared for

its arrival by aligning the curriculum of its schools more closely with the territorial curriculum, and by increasing the pupils' opportunities for secondary education. When the census of 1950 revealed that about 1,400 children of school age were living beyond the range of any school, federal or territorial, that 30 per cent of Alaska's non-white (i.e., native) adults 25 years of age and over had received no schooling of any kind, and that another 30 per cent had never passed beyond the 6th grade, the Bureau took active steps to improve the situation, even though it could already read its doom in the handwriting on its walls. It added two more grades, 7 and 8, to many of its elementary schools in order to bring their pupils up to high-school entrance; and it carried its elementary instruction into some smaller and remoter villages by establishing a number of "instructional aid" schools, that is to say, schools in which "qualified natives" residing in the communities substituted for fully trained teachers in giving the prescribed instruction.

During the last decade the Bureau has been operating only one high school in Alaska, at Mount Edgecumbe near Sitka. This had been a navy air station during the war, but it was decommissioned in 1947 and transferred to the Department of the Interior, which at once converted its shops, hangars, homes, and other buildings into a large vocational high school capable of training about 700 native boys and girls—the majority of them Indians, but a fair proportion Eskimos. Mount Edgecumbe then superseded the three much smaller vocational schools that had operated before the war at Eklutna, Kanakanak, and White Mountain, although the last-named school did not finally close until 1953. The new high school offers its students an arts education up to college entrance, training for boys in house-building, boat-building, plumbing, electrical work, machine-shop work, etc., and training for girls in domestic science, nursing, and several kinds of office work. Any graduate who wishes to continue his or her education may request a grant from the Bureau, or apply for one of the ten scholarships which the University of Alaska is offering annually to native students. Neither grant nor scholarship, however, covers the full expenses of a university or technical college course. The student must find well-paid employment during the summer months, and sometimes part-time work during the academic year. Unhappily, this is not always possible.

Mount Edgecumbe is a residential high school outside the Eskimo region, and there are serious disadvantages, quite apart from the cost, in sending young Eskimo children far away from their homes to give them a secondary education. The same holds true of white children also if the new environment is totally strange to them. Mindful of this the territorial Department of Education, which is concerned with the children of all United States citizens in Alaska irrespective of their origin, has set up small multi-racial high schools in three communities where over 50 per cent of the schoolchildren are Eskimos. The largest is at Nome: it enrolled in 1957-8 slightly over 100 pupils and offered them a number of courses leading to college entrance. The other two, at Bethel and Dillingham, are much smaller, Bethel having only 25 pupils in 1957-8 and Dillingham only 48: neither in consequence could offer more than limited academic instruction. So scattered indeed is the Eskimo population, so small many of the settlements, that it is impossible to establish even an elementary school in every hamlet, or to educate the children beyond the 8th grade in any villages except the three or four largest. In recent years, therefore,

educational authorities have been discussing the advisability of setting up regional high schools in such settlements as Point Barrow, Kotzebue, and Hooper Bay, and of providing suitable housing there so that the schools would accommodate not the local students only, but students from all the surrounding districts. Inevitably, however, they faced this problem. Since none of the communities rests on a solid economic base, what assurance could there be that any one of them, or the district around it, would maintain its present population and not decline, as so many places have declined along the Alaskan coastline? In 1947 the authorities had spent \$380,000 on a new elementary school, with high school facilities, at Klawock, a thriving fishing-village in southeast Alaska that could show a school enrolment of approximately 100 and good prospects of future growth: but shortly after the school was completed many of the villagers began to move away to Ketchikan and other towns, and by 1957-8 the school enrolment had dropped to 42.

Since 1939 the Alaska Department of Education has flirted with correspondence courses, and in 1955 it set up a pilot program in which pupils of three elementary schools, supervised by the local teachers, followed some special correspondence courses arranged by the Extension Division of the University of Nebraska. The results, however, were not encouraging, and the whole problem of secondary education is now undergoing further study.

On one point there is widespread agreement, that in this technological age the Eskimos should receive far better education. Each day it is becoming more and more apparent that their present inadequate schooling, the low incomes they are earning, and the heavy subsidies they are receiving through various public-welfare funds are all closely interrelated.

"Decisive changes in the Alaskan economy and the resultant cultural changes affecting the lives of Alaskan natives create a demand for a considerably higher level of education than is now being attained by native youths in order for them to cope with these changes. Recent economic surveys present disturbing statistics pertaining to the low income received and the lack of saleable skills possessed by the majority of adult natives. The Alaska Rural Development Board published the result of an economic study conducted in the Kotzebue, Noatak-Kobuk region in which it was stated that the annual unearned income (aid to dependent children, old age pensions, aid to the blind, unemployment compensations, Alaska Native Service welfare, and service dependencies) amounted to \$791.58 per family for nine villages included in the study.

"While it is hoped that education will have broader benefits than mere economic ones, nevertheless, the unquestionable fact remains that the better-paying jobs require more education than can be provided in the elementary school grades. With the increasing complexity of our present society which demands added skills on the part of its citizens, the trend is toward extending secondary education in the United States to include grades thirteen and fourteen. Certainly in Alaska, a high school education must be the minimum goal for native youth, with provisions for an even higher level of education wherever possible.

"The native people themselves recognize the changes their economy is undergoing and desire preparation to meet the demands which they will inevitably face." (Rae, 1959, pp. 176-7).

Today only a handful of Alaskan Eskimos continue their education beyond high-school graduation, and most of these drop out after the first year. Their main stumbling-block, apparently, is English, for neither in the elementary schools nor even in the high schools do they acquire proficiency in the language: its analytical character indeed, and the virtual absence of any inflections, make it so unlike their own highly inflected, polysyllabic tongue that it demands from

them totally different thought-sequences. In most villages the Eskimo school-child hears and speaks English only in the classroom and during random contacts with whites outside the school. Students at the Mount Edgecumbe high school use it more regularly, for it is their only medium of communication with their Indian fellow-students. But a University of Alaska course in education, mathematics, or engineering requires much more than a mere conversational acquaintance with the English language; and only about one in five of the Eskimos who have attended that university has completed his course and obtained a degree. In every sphere of life, indeed, whether it be higher education, the employment field, or simply travel, the Eskimo's imperfect knowledge of English is seriously handicapping his progress. The 10-year-old schoolboy in arctic Alaska who said to his new teacher "Me go home" and left her wondering whether he meant "I am going home", "I will go home", or "I went home",¹ had a long hard road to travel before he could obtain an engineering degree or a mate's certificate on a Pacific Coast steamer.

There must surely be some grave weakness in a school system that from the outset has aimed to speed up the assimilation of the Eskimos by teaching them before all else the English language, yet after 75 years of effort has failed to give them sufficient command of that language to meet the requirements of everyday life in Alaska and the United States. Many adult Eskimos who have never attended any school have learned through working with white men to speak better English than their children. Why should this be so?

Ray, the latest investigator of Eskimo education, repeats all the criticisms of Anderson and Eells in 1930 concerning the inadequacy of a school program slanted toward non-native pupils, the poor qualifications of most of the teachers, despite high salaries, and their overloading with extraneous duties by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He concludes:

"A large part of the present gap between native and non-native levels of education can be attributed to inefficient methods of instruction. Particularly in the area of communication, techniques which have been developed for teaching English as a second language should be adapted and utilized." (1959, p. 262).

Australia, which has been flooded with immigrants from many countries since the Second World War, has evolved a system of teaching them English which has enabled 50,000 new settlers to gain a better grasp of their new tongue. Her system has spread to North Borneo, and, with slight modifications, to Malaya, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; and it has been adopted by the Inter-Governmental Committee in Europe to give prospective emigrants basic knowledge of English before they set sail for English-speaking countries (*New York Times*, 19 August 1960). It may or may not be applicable to Alaska; but the United States, which gained vast experience in teaching foreign languages to her enlisted soldiers during the recent war, can certainly adapt it, or devise another system that will more nearly cover Eskimo needs.

Bering Strait is but fifty miles wide: from the mountainside at Wales I have gazed across it and seen East Cape on the Soviet shore. To the Eskimos it has never been a barrier, but a highway uniting kindred on one side with kindred on the other. Two thousand years ago it was bringing from far-eastern Asia new ideas about life and death—techniques to help the living Eskimos hunt the big bowhead whales, and burial rituals that would assist their

¹Letter from a school-teacher in the Kotzebue area, 1960.

dead. Before and after Vitus Bering explored the strait that bears his name, or Captain James Cook anchored within it and looked north into the unknown Chukchi Sea, Eskimos from the Asiatic shore were crossing from East Cape to attend the annual trade fair in Kotzebue Sound, where they sold "turquoise" beads and scraps of iron to their American cousins, and initiated them into the joys of tobacco and pipe-smoking. Today Bering Strait is still a highway, although the traffic may be temporarily suspended, as on the autobahn to Berlin. When it reopens, will it bring to Alaska's Eskimos more modern ideas—concerning the "blessings" of national socialism, perhaps, and the weaknesses of a capitalist system that can leave unfinished, on Alaska's under-developed coast, a task that national socialism might have brought to a speedy conclusion?

It will bring new ideas, no doubt, but I think, not these. For by the time traffic begins to flow across the strait again the United States will surely have resolved its unfinished business along this coast. It does not lack the tools.

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