

set foot on the native country. Same can be said in regards to the Indian people before the white man invasion of his country. With this introduction of the Judiac-Christian philosophy way of life the problem of housing began. This was first of all started with the family concept of the new philosophy—one man, one wife, one house idea. I am not saying that the idea is wrong but that the means to achieving it is wrong. The new philosophy did not provide the adequate means. As the result of this conflict we have the housing problem of the Native people of Alaska.

Abrams³ writes about this condition:

"The snow igloos still seen in the Canadian arctic and the Aleut's barbara (a sod house with driftwood timber supporting the roof) which had been the traditional shelter of these natives had long ago given way to the small frame houses one now sees in most of the villages; so, too, the summer tupek of skins has been replaced by the canvas tent used as a temporary shelter in areas where the game and fish are present. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, writing shortly after the turn of the century of an expedition into the arctic, records that up to about 30 years before his journey, the beaches around Point Barrow had been thickly strewn with driftwood which was harnessed by the Eskimo into the construction of his shelter. The houses were crude but were built so that not much fuel was needed to keep them warm. When the frames were put together, they were covered with earth to a thickness that made the shelters practically cold proof. They were entered through a long alleyway by a door that was never closed even during the winter, and the ventilating hole in the roof was always open so that a current of air circulated through the house at all times. For this kind of a house two or three seal oil lamps would keep the temperature at a uniform 60 to 70 degrees fahrenheit throughout the winter. But contact with another culture also induces emulation—for better or worse—and the contact with the white man according to Stefansson was for the worse—at least as far as his house was concerned.

"With the white men of the last half century there came to the Arctic the white men' lofty and commodious frame dwellings. Although these are thoroughly ill-adapted to the country, they soon became the fashion, and the Eskimo began to build their poor hovels in the best imitation they could make of the pretentious homes of the foreigners. The flimsy walls of these new dwellings admitted cold by conduction so that the seal-oil lamps were no longer sufficient for keeping them warm, and even the sheet-iron stoves in which driftwood could be burned had difficulty in keeping them at a comfortable temperature. Driftwood lay in apparently inexhaustible wind rows along the seashore, but these were the accumulations of centuries, which the Eskimo, having no use for wood as fuel, had allowed to grow. Now instead of being used as formerly only in the construction of the house frames and in the making of sleds and implements, the driftwood was used for fuel in an attempt to keep the flimsy new style house warm. The result was that the driftwood disappeared so rapidly that in thirty years, by the use of stoves, all of it is gone, from Point Hope to thirty miles east of Point Barrow. With the increasing scarcity of fuel the ventilation of the houses had to be curtailed gradually, so that the modern Eskimo house is practically sealed against fresh air. If there is a keyhole on the door you will find it stuffed with chewing gum."⁴

As the result of the un-vented dwelling of the present day Native people we have record breaking statistics in ill-health with the pulmonary ailments leading the way.

It must be said that not only the coming of the white man as such prompted the Natives to adopt the new house but that the Educational philosophy directed from Washington played a very vital roll in accomplishing this folly. The idea was that a house that was not vertical is either "vulgar or degrading."

According to studies made by the Federal Field Committee of some 7,500 dwellings about 7,100 need replacement according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs an additional 344 new dwellings are dwellings that are needed annually because of population increases.⁵

On a regional basis, housing conditions vary somewhat as reported by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to Congressional Committee in 1966, but the uniformity of their reports is more pronounced than their variety!

"Southeastern: Except in one village the housing situation is most deplorable. All but a few homes in each locale are dilapidated and substandard.

³ Charles Abrams, *Housing the Alaska Native*, published by the Alaska State Housing Authority, February 1967, Anchorage, p. 10.

⁴ Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *My Life With the Eskimo*, the Macmillan Company, 1913, p. 91.

⁵ Federal Field Committee for Development Planning on Alaska, Report, Anch.