Consulting the New Doctor

BY ARVILE SCHELEN

wealthy woman

Palmer, Alaska—(By Mail)—Some time or other in the course of any extended conversation among colonists, the men get to arguing about whether there will be a market for what they can raise in the Matanuska valley colony. Most of them concede that they can draw a comfortable subsistence out of the soil. They also believe that they can produce enough to make a reasonable profit if they can sell their surplus. Indications are that they can sell all their surplus if they can capture the market.

For the 12 months ending June 30, 1934, United States production shipped to Alaska $2,292,564 worth of products which this colony could produce. These included beef, pork, potatoes, poultry and fresh muscle, butter, cheese, eggs, potatoes and various fresh and canned vegetables. The largest individual commodity was $81,340 worth of milk. The second largest was $16,010 worth of beef.

Market of 15,000

Matanuska farmers can practically sell all to about 15,000 persons. Give them the equivalent of one-half Alaska's 60,000 people and you concede them all the farmers' import business. Most Alaska experts believe this figure too low. General Director Don Stahl of the colonization project estimates their market at $1,000,000. Ross Sheeley, President of the University of Alaska at Fairbanks puts it at $1,000,000, and General Manager O. P. O'Brien of the Alaska railroad figures it at $1,000,000.

But even taking the $1,000,000 figure, it is plain that the approximate 200 new valley farmers and the 200 old who have more market than they can supply to this market. To reach this total each farmer or family should have to work hard and produce yearly through the marketing system to enable them to live comfortably. If the colony gets a good market, there will be no need to do this. But the railroad alone employs 1,000 men. That is an increase of about 50 per cent over the winter. I think one out of every five new men added comes from the Matanuska each spring and goes quickly again in the winter. Now then, besides the winter and summer railroad belt population, the Matanuska farmers can extend their

weighted through airline services to

the software carry a great deal of mail and fresh meats, eggs

and vegetables.

It doesn't believe that Alaska can ever export agricultural commodities in any quantity. But the railroad belt all the colonists will do.

Besides the railroad belt, the Willow Creek, Chat Creek and Broad Pass gold mining districts add to the potential market. Matanuska farmers, I think probably will become the marketing center for the valley, also supplies the Matanuska mining district, part of the Nome country and the fishing communities along Cooks Inlet. The Bristol Bay mining area has a smaller population of about 700 but gets a few supplies through Beaver.

May Become Consumers

It appears from everywhere, therefore, that a market already exists in Matanuska. The Matanuska colony may develop differently from the situa-

tion America's first western pio-

ners faced! If years they them-
self rate what most certainly the
United States has the land, it does not have to appeal to the agricultural market at present. Alaska has the market—now. If eventually the territory is to be populated by people who have not done so well in the States—and products. This will be discussed in a second article.

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