

## 22 Men Quit Colony Jobs

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Leave Alaska Valley to  
'Mosquitoes,' Transients  
Say on Departure

BY ARVILLE SCHALEBEN  
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

Palmer, Alaska—(By Radio)—At least 22 transient laborers quit the Matanuska valley colonization project in a group Monday because of dissatisfaction with conditions. Four others were fired for drunkenness.

This reduced the construction division personnel, whose laborers came from California transient camps, to 400 men just at the time when every man is needed and Frank U. Bliss, director of construction, is calling for more help because he is behind schedule. He has been promised 80 lumberjacks from Washington state.

### Mismanagement Charged

"All I can say," Bliss said, "is that these men were dissatisfied with life in Alaska and this kind of camp life. Their quitting is not unexpected and we expect more quitting. The reason this came to a head now is that we are just starting to crack down on the work schedule and they didn't like it."

The men said they quit because of mismanagement. They claim they signed up in California to do one kind of work and have been doing other kinds here.

"I'm a carpenter," one said, "and I've been cutting more bacon than I ever saw in my life. They had me working in the kitchen."

Another explained that he had signed as a steel worker and that there was nothing but logs to work with in Alaska. Others claimed they were machinists or truck operators and had been handling freight or brushing.

### Had to Pay Own Fare

These men asserted that they were absolutely promised the kind of work they were fitted for but Bliss said they were simply classified and told they would have to do whatever work was required. Bliss was borne out by the work agreements, in which the men agreed "to perform such technical, manual or other duties as directed by superintendents" for 48 hours weekly.

Some men also complained about the hours of work, the food and the fact that they hadn't known what their wages would be. The agreements said no less than \$20 a month wage.

All 26 men were required to pay their own railroad transportation to Seward, costing \$9.65. They will be hauled to Seattle on the government chartered North Star. The railroad fare comes out of what money they had coming from the government for their labor.

"Gosh," one protested at the fare, "I could walk and make wages."

### Finished Their "Chapter"

It was an odd scene when they boarded the train. Many didn't have a dollar in their pockets. They carried blanket rolls and old suitcases

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## Workers Quit Jobs in Colony

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and joshed about being through making history.

"We've written a chapter and that's enough," they said. "Let the suckers stay here with the mosquitoes and finish the book."

Their reference was to the fact that some foremen have been telling the men how they are going down in the history books for their work done in Alaska.

Construction crew friends who happened not to be working came down to the tiny station to see them off and made bets about who would have the best stake in November, those who stayed or those who left.

When the train pulled out past the construction camp two miles from the station groups of workers gathered and waved and shouted goodby. The men on the train stuck their heads out of the windows and cried 'So long, Alaska, so long, you old mosquito swamp.'

### It Really Is Important

While the officials, with much discretion, say this was expected and take it with a smile, it is much more important than just 26 men quitting a construction camp.

This project was to indicate somewhat how such fully trained men could be rehabilitated, just as it is to show how successfully 200 farmers can be rehabilitated in their work.

Now there are 400 odd construc-

tion men left but if desertions develop on a large scale it might well mean that no more transient camp labor would be used on other contemplated projects like the Matanuska colonization project.