

STATEWIDE IN ALASKA

Highlights: Businessmen in Alaska can now hire and train jobless disadvantaged Alaskans by contracting with the U. S. Department of Labor under the Department's JOBS (Job Opportunities in the Business Sector) program. The project is designed to enlist the resources of private industry in providing jobs and training for disadvantaged persons. Funds are provided to help companies offset costs of recruiting, on-the-job training, and supportive services. The basic purpose of the program is to enable the employer to increase the skills of his workforce while helping the disadvantaged obtain productive and satisfying employment.

Most industries in Alaska could probably utilize the program. One industry in particular to which the JOBS program could be beneficial is the oil industry. At present most oilfield workers are imported from outside Alaska. Under JOBS, disadvantaged Alaskans could be trained to fill many of these positions. This will benefit both the oil industry and the State. Oil companies will be saved the expense of recruiting and of transporting workers to Alaska and the State will benefit in terms of lower rates of unemployment.

El Paso Natural Gas Company has opened a hard rock mineral exploration office in Ketchikan. According to the Anchorage Daily News, the office will have a full time winter employment level of six persons. During the past summer, a fourteen man geochemical exploration crew did surveys of stream sediments on both the Prince of Wales Island and the mainland. No information is available as to the mineral prospects or the type of minerals being sought. However, the establishment of a permanent office indicates that the company may have definite plans to develop mineral property in the State's southern panhandle area.

The winter road to the North Slope, also known as the Hickel Highway, will be reopened to the extent that available funds allow. Preliminary studies indicate that the State Legislature's \$433,000 winter road appropriation will allow opening and maintenance of the section between Livengood and Bettles. In addition, the second segment from Bettles to Anaktuvuk Pass may also be opened. The remaining section from Anaktuvuk Pass to the North Slope cannot be reopened without additional funding. Because of this, an inspection permit system to allow qualified users to travel that portion at their own risk is under study. Preliminary work, including construction of an ice bridge across the Yukon River, was to begin in early December. Construction of the ice bridge will employ residents of Steven's Village, which lies near the Yukon River crossing point.

Alaska's halibut fishery appears to be on a cyclical upswing. According to preliminary data from the International Halibut Commission, halibut landings in Alaska totaled 20.5 million pounds during the past season. In 1968, landings of halibut and sable fish, combined, totaled less than 13.5 million pounds. With a 25 to 30 percent increase in the price of halibut over the year, the total value of Alaska's catch should reach close to \$8.25 million.

One of the main reasons for the increased landings has been the rise in importance of western Alaska ports, particularly Kodiak, as receivers and processors of halibut. This has had two main benefits. First, because western

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Alaska ports are closer to the halibut fishing grounds, fishermen can spend more time actually fishing. In previous years catches were marketed in Southeast Alaska or even as far away as Seattle. Secondly, the shorter time from catch to processing has resulted in a fresher, better product. This should bring about a further increased market demand for Alaska's halibut.

The Big Bear Refinery on the Kenai Peninsula went into production during mid-November. The facility, which will process the State's royalty oil from the Kenai and Cook Inlet oil fields, is presently in a testing phase. Tesoro-Alaskan Petroleum Corporation, owner of the refinery, has a contract to begin buying State royalty oil on January 1. The plant will produce jet fuel for the Air Force and diesel oil for sale on the Alaska market. Full time employment is seventeen including management personnel. Of these, fifteen were hired locally in the Kenai area.

Alaska's North Slope is about to get its first industrial park. North Slope Enterprises Incorporated and North Slope Services Incorporated are developing a 100 acre site near the Deadhorse airstrip. Camp-type housing for at least 100 men is contemplated. Other facilities will include office space, warehousing and open storage areas. The park will be utilized by oil industry service and supply companies. In addition plans call for a fresh produce and grocery outlet to supply the entire area with fresh food. Final completion of the project is five years off; however, one company already has facilities on the partially developed site.

A new sawmill is to be constructed in the area of either Cordova or Seward. The mill will be built by South Central Timber Development Inc. It will process logs from Icy Cape, where the company recently purchased a timber cutting contract. As with most of Alaska's wood products, the lumber will ultimately go to Japan. Iwakura-Gumi Lumber Company Ltd., owner of South Central Development Inc., will receive all of the timber processed by the mill.

On November 14 the Swanson River oil field on the Kenai Peninsula pumped its 100 millionth barrel of oil. This is not a large amount by North Slope standards. However, it was this discovery a little over twelve years ago which put oil exploration in Alaska into high gear and ultimately led to the discovery of the vast Prudhoe Bay field.

Employment:

Although total estimated employment continued to fall seasonally over-the-month, it was still well above last year's November figure. Construction, trade and services showed the largest gains in employment; however, the increasing dynamism of Alaska's economy was visible in almost every sector.

In spite of being 500 ahead of last year's November figures, employment in mining has declined steadily since August due to a slowing of oil industry activity on