

STATEWIDE IN ALASKA

Highlights: Limelighting the February news scene in Alaska was the joint agreement between three North Slope oil companies to build a \$900 million pipeline from the Slope to the GULF OF ALASKA. An 800 mile long 48-inch diameter pipeline is being proposed with an initial operating capacity of 500,000 barrels of oil a day. The pipeline is scheduled to be completed in 1972. Although the final destination has not been released, forecasters place the pipeline's terminating point at VALDEZ.

A West German steel company was in FAIRBANKS recently investigating the potentiality of establishing a pipeline fabricating plant there. The plant's main function would be to manufacture pipe for the North Slope pipeline. Costing \$10 million to construct, the plant would employ 250-300 persons.

Alaska's population is forecasted to reach 335,000 by 1975 according to figures recently released by the Alaska Department of Labor. The figures, reflecting a moderate growth pattern, also estimate that total employment will approach 120,000. Industries which are forecasted to reflect the highest growth rate are oil & gas exploration and production, wholesale & retail trade, and school, hospital, & oil supportive industry services. The total unemployment rate is expected to remain above 8 percent through 1975.

A major Alaska construction company will play an important role in the construction boom surfacing on the NORTH SLOPE. The Fairbanks based company has secured contracts from petroleum companies involved in exploratory drilling on the Slope for airfield, road, and drilling pad projects. A total of \$2 million worth of new equipment will be moved over the winter road to the company's planned permanent base camp. The base camp is designed to become a permanent community and will be called SPRUCE. The company will operate through a subsidiary company in fulfilling North Slope contracts.

The processing plant in SEWARD has been purchased by a firm which had leased the plant last season and is currently operating a scallop fleet out of that city. Seward has been selected by the operators of the fleet as their permanent home port. A significant development in the scallop industry is that the U. S. Army is buying Alaska-produced scallops in Alaska.

Forest fires claimed a total of 1,090,000 acres of land in 1968 involving 446 reported fires in Alaska, according to the Bureau of Land Management. An all time high for fires was reached in the past year, but acreage loss was not nearly as severe as 1957's five million acre burn. Smoke jumpers made a total of 1,176 fire jumps on 169 fires this past season.

A major airline servicing Alaska reported 19,331 passengers traveled with them in November. This represented a 49.6 percent increase over the corresponding period last year. The November total brought the 1968 revenue passengers carried in scheduled service during the first 11 months to 351,501, according to the company's management.