

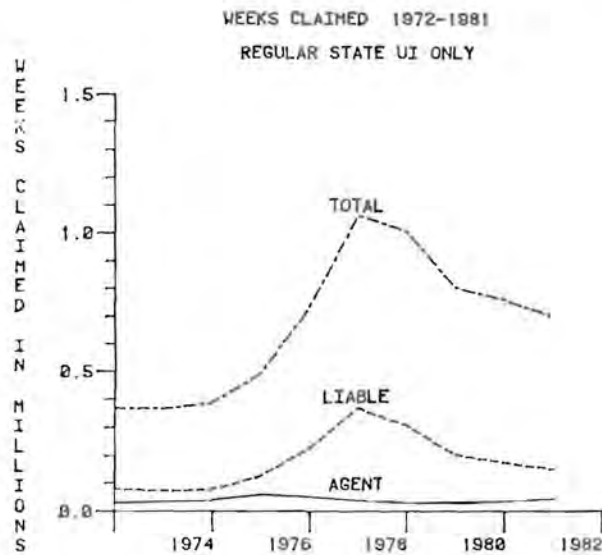
IN-MIGRATION OF UNEMPLOYED CLAIMANTS ON THE RISE

By Scott Hannigan

Interstate agent and interstate liable claims represent a significant proportion of all unemployment insurance (UI) claims processed in Alaska. Interstate agent claims are UI claims filed in Alaska by unemployed workers who earned their wages in another state. Alaska's UI offices act as the "agent" for these workers by accepting their initial request for UI payments and transmitting those requests to the claimants' former state of employment. Interstate liable claims are UI claims filed outside Alaska by claimants who earned wages in Alaska. Since the wages were earned in Alaska, the state is "liable" for payment of the UI claim. All states have an agreement to exchange requests for unemployment insurance with the original state of employment allowing unemployed workers the mobility to search for jobs across state lines.

The number of Interstate claimants is indicative of the size of the mobile workforce that migrates in and out of Alaska on a seasonal basis and during periods of rapid economic growth (as witnessed during construction of the Trans-Alaska oil pipeline). In fact it is possible, to a certain extent, to plot the rise and fall of Alaska's economy over the years by tracing the counter-prevailing trend of agent and liable claims; agent claims on the upside and liable claims on the downside.

Agent weeks claimed in 1972 equaled approximately 8% of all weeks claimed in Alaska and increased steadily each year through 1975 (one year prior to maximum construction activity on the pipeline) to reach a peak of 12% of all weeks claimed. Liable weeks claimed averaged 20% from 1972 to 1974, climbed to 26% in 1975, and reached a maximum of 35% of all weeks claimed in 1977. During the peak year for agent claims (1975), approximately 37% of all weeks claimed in the Fairbanks area were agent claims. Anchorage recorded about 19% and the rest of Alaska's UI offices from 5% to 17%. Agent claims declined from their high of 12% in 1975 to a low of 3% in 1978. Liable claims have continuously declined every year from a high of 35% in 1977 to 22% in 1981. Agent claims, however, are now on the rise again. From a low of 3% of all weeks claimed in 1978, agent claims increased to 6% of all weeks claimed in 1981. Preliminary data for the first quarter of 1982 indicate that the trend is continuing. (See Page 12).



Since there are no definite or concrete plans for a major construction project in Alaska in the near future, the impetus or the current influx of out-of-state workers appears to be rounded on a combination of intangible or immeasurable factors. Some of these factors include the declining economy in the rest of the nation, anticipation of the construction of the recently postponed gas pipeline, the lure of "high paying" jobs, and Alaska's image as the "*Last Frontier*." If the pattern of Alaska's UI claims activities of the past holds, then no doubt the current increase in agent claims will result in a rise of liable claims in the future.
