

STATEWIDE IN ALASKA

Highlights: According to figures released by the U.S. Department of Commerce, the value of Alaska's exports rose from \$55 million in 1968 to \$92.2 million in 1969, reflecting a gain of 68 percent. As in previous years, Japan was the State's best customer, accounting for nearly two thirds of the total. The majority of the exports to Japan consisted of wood products whose total value was around \$49.5 million.

The value of Alaska's exports should continue to rise in the years ahead, primarily as a result of increasing purchases by Japan. Due to an easing of controls by the country's government, Japanese direct foreign investment is expected to double, reaching almost \$1 billion during the coming fiscal year.

It is already certain that wood product exports to the Island Nation will register further gains. U.S. Plywood Champion has a fifteen year contract to supply \$40 million worth of pulp and lumber annually to a Japanese paper firm once their new pulp mill, to be built near Juneau, begins production. In addition, Japanese interests are planning to build a sawmill in Southcentral Alaska to cut timber from the Icy Cape area prior to shipping it to Japan.

However, even though lumber exports to Japan will continue to increase, it is likely that the percentage of the total exports which they comprise will decline. Currently Japan's industries are becoming more and more interested in the development of Alaska's mineral, coal and petroleum resources. Japanese interests are heavily involved in the reopening of the Red Devil mercury mine near Sleetmute on the Kuskokwim River. Reports indicate that Japanese steel firms may buy iron ore concentrates which Marcon Corporation would produce from its proposed Snettisham development. In the coal sector, an Alaska based company will begin shipping coal from the Bearing River Coal fields to Japan in 1971. Japanese interest in Alaska's petroleum reserves is reflected in the formation, by a group of Japanese firms, of a company to bid for oil and gas leases on Alaska's North Slope (see following story).

With Japanese foreign investment expected to total around \$3 billion by 1975, the value of Alaska's exports should rise further as the state continues to fulfill its role as a major supplier of raw materials for Japan's industry.

Japanese to bid on North Slope lands: A joint oil development venture composed of a number of Japanese firms was formed recently to bid for acreage on Alaska's North Slope. The enterprise, named North Slope Company, Ltd., is supported by twenty-six firms including the government owned Japan Petroleum Development Corp. Other firms involved in the venture come from the oil refining, electric utility, mining, chemical, fiber, and steel industries.

Kaiser Steel Corp. Investigating Arctic Coal: Reports indicate that Kaiser Steel Corporation is planning an extensive coal prospecting venture this summer in the vicinity of Cape Beaufort on the Chuckchi Seacoast. Coal of the type found in

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February, 1970

this area is made into coke which is used to fuel blast furnaces in the production of pig iron. Kaiser's interest in the deposits probably stems from the current world wide shortage of coke, which lately has forced steel makers to utilize other less efficient means of steel production. No firm information on the magnitude of the deposits is available, however, the region is thought to contain billions of tons of coal.

Seward Fish Plant expands Facilities: Currently nearing completion is a project that will greatly increase the capacity of the Seward fisheries processing plant in Seward. The expanded plant will have a 100,000 pound daily freezing capacity and is scheduled to begin processing salmon and halibut as soon as the fishing season begins. In addition to the above two species, the plant will also process scallops. Because of the diversity of species processed, the facility should have less seasonal employment fluctuations than is normal in Alaska's seafood processing industry.

Manpower Training Programs: Twenty-eight Alaskans will be trained in skills related to painting and decorating under a contract between the U.S. Department of Labor and the National Joint Painting and Decorating Apprenticeship Committee. The contract calls for promotion and development of subcontracts with local unions, district councils and employers to upgrade the skills of journeymen and prepare unemployed and disadvantaged persons for early entry into employment. Included in the training will be skills such as painting, paper hanging, decorating, floor covering, dry wall tapering, glazing and sign writing.

In another federal program, fifteen jobless or underemployed Alaskans will receive training as diesel mechanics. The program will be sponsored jointly by the Departments of Labor and Health, Education and Welfare, and funded under the Manpower Development and Training Act. The training, which will extend over thirty-three weeks, will be conducted at the Alaska Skill Center in Seward.

Alaska's Manpower Outlook-1970's, a publication concerning Alaska's occupational supply and demand in the decade of the 70's will be released by Research and Analysis in June. Interested Trends readers are encouraged to write in advance for their copies since the number of copies will be limited. The study is based on compiled results of recent surveys of private employers, both inside and outside Alaska, government employers, and schools and unions. The report will include population and workforce predictions, by industry and by each of four major geographical areas, for the next ten years. Over 200 occupations are included in the study and will be evaluated from both a supply and demand viewpoint. Interested readers should write:

Alaska's Manpower Outlook - 1970's
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