

## STATEWIDE IN ALASKA

As part of its continuing effort to upgrade the State's manpower training programs, the Manpower Training Division of the Alaska Department of Labor is currently engaged in a study which will review all manpower training programs in operation throughout the State. The goal of the Department of Labor is to provide meaningful training for the State's unemployed and underemployed; training programs which will prepare Alaskans for existing and anticipated occupational shortages in the Alaska labor market. "It is evident," Director of Manpower Training Paul Choquette emphasized, "that a number of our programs have, for various reasons, failed to achieve the desired results. By working closely with representatives of labor and industry, we hope to develop programs which will prepare participants for employment opportunities that will definitely exist when they complete their training. This could mean revision of existing programs, implementation of new programs, and possibly elimination of present programs that are not accomplishing the desired results."

Choquette emphasized that the need for productive manpower training programs was extremely urgent, in light of the projected manpower needs of the State in the near future: "The construction of the Trans Alaska pipeline will exert immediate and long-term demands for skilled and semi-skilled workers in Alaska and it is our goal to provide Alaskans with the skills necessary to fill these positions. We are especially concerned with providing skilled Alaskans to fill jobs in the supportive industries throughout the State, as the labor demands in these industries will be just as great as for those related to pipeline construction." Choquette explained that "Industry estimates there will be between 7,200 to 10,000 pipeline oriented jobs at the peak of the construction phase, and 1-1/4 jobs in supportive industries for each pipeline-oriented job. Hence, the State's prime concern is the labor needs of all industries, not just the construction industry during pipeline construction. Pipeline jobs are only a part of the total program."

In preparation for pipeline construction employment, Choquette and other representatives of the Department of Labor have been meeting with labor and industry officials, representatives of Alyeska Pipeline Service Co., and other interested State and federal agencies, discussing manpower needs during the construction period of the Trans Alaska pipeline. The State hopes to develop training programs which would provide job-ready individuals for pipeline construction jobs. Because of the limited time available, training could only be provided for the semi-skilled construction jobs, but the State is "very anxious to get started now" in training Alaskans for these jobs, Choquette added. The State faces a particularly unique challenge in respect to pipeline construction jobs, Choquette explains: "Whereas existing and former manpower training programs have been implemented to fill job shortages already evident, we are 'betting on the come', so to speak, in regard to training people for pipeline jobs that do not presently exist. However, the very nature of the pipeline project makes it imperative that Alaskans be trained and ready when construction begins. We expect to rely heavily on existing union apprenticeship programs to help us in this task."

Choquette stressed the need for a coordinated effort between the State, labor and industry to assure the success of future manpower training programs. "The success of these programs will be measured by their ability to place the trainees in jobs that they were trained for. We will work closely with labor and industry to insure that jobs are available -- this will benefit the unions, industry, and the State, as well as the individual," he said.

One program that has been very successful in placing participants is the federally funded Public Employment Program (PEP). The Manpower Training Division is acting for this program. Under the PEP program, qualifying individuals are placed in public employment positions with State and local governments, for a period of one year. At the end of the period, it is hoped that at least 50% of these

positions will be funded by the local institution on a continuing basis, and success has been good, so far, explains PEP Project Coordinator Boyd Karrer. The federal government covers 90% of the cost of the program, in the form of salary allotments, while State and local participation is in providing administration of the program. Approximately 600 job positions were allocated to 58 local and State agencies under the program, and about 480 have been filled so far, Karrer explains. Veterans, minority group members, and hardship cases are hired preferentially under this program. Although pleased with the PEP program, which is only a temporary solution to our unemployment, Choquette stressed the need for other extensive programs at the State level if Alaska's tremendous manpower needs in future years are to be met with qualified Alaskans. Choquette is confident that effective programs can be designed, but cited the traditional problems of financing and facilities as potential, but not insurmountable road

blocks. "The State is very concerned about the problems of manpower training, and is expected to give them increasing attention in the near future", according to Choquette.

**Cost of Living Study Available.** The latest publication in the Economic Analysis series published by the Research and Analysis Section is currently available. Entitled **Components of Cost of Living: A Four City Survey**, the report studies cost of living relationships between the cities of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau and Ketchikan, examining the causes responsible for cost of living increases and decreases in these cities. The 14 page report is available from:

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