

# 'Best Ever' Construction Season Ends--Politics or New Prosperity?

By Tim Bradner

Looking up at fresh, new snow a grizzled construction Veteran stroked his chin thoughtfully: "It's going to be a good winter. It was a good summer."

He opened his billfold and counted through a wad of green dollar bills. He pulled

out a plane ticket stamped for home — Chalkyitsik, Alaska.

"First I'm paying off last winter's bills. Then I'm making a down payment on a snow-go and some parts, buy some new traps and hit the trail for fur soon as snow is deep enough."

One of the best construction seasons in Alaska is

just ending.

"It was certainly one of our good years," says Hap Currington, Teamster's union president in Fairbanks. "Probably the best we've had in the Interior since Clear was built in 1960. I wish the good weather could have lasted about two more weeks."

"With some of the jobs we

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# Well-Paying Jobs Went Begging During Summer...

may last for a few more weeks but with cold weather we're pretty well tightened down."

In both the Teamsters and Laborer's Union halls there were long periods this summer when the union "benches" were completely clear of waiting men.

Well-paying construction jobs were going begging.

"It's been a long, long time since I've seen anything like it," one union official commented.

Many millions of dollars were poured into local economies this summer by the spurt in construction work.

Some say the prosperity, adding shots of adrenalin to a sagging Interior economy, was due partially to upcoming political elections.

One union official said, "a lot of these jobs were deliberately planned for this year. The parties in power want to make themselves look good, so just before voters go to the polls the controlling interests make sure they go with a full bank account. They want them to be happy and satisfied just before elections."

What about after elections?

"I don't know what next

next summer will bring," another labor leader commented, "I don't think it will shape up to be as good as this year, at least not in the construct-

ion business. change very though."

This can suddenly,