

Capital Selection Committee workshops

Over 195 people in Juneau, 35 in Ketchikan and 40 in Sitka turned out to attend the three Capital Site Selection Committee workshops held July 26th, 27th and 28th in their cities. Each workshop was highlighted by extremely vocal reactions against the capital move and as expected a majority of the questions directed to the committee concerned the potential costs.

In Juneau, Rep. Mike Miller and Jim Duncan expressed concerns that money spent for the capital move might take state and federal funds away from projects in Juneau, Ketchikan and other cities. Other issues brought to the committee's attention were: What happens after the election; what will be the planning authority of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough after the site is selected; will the move cause an adverse effect on the amount of federal funds available to Alaska; and what benefits will be derived by the state in opening up the western Susitna Valley to development if Mt. Yenlo is selected. In the non-economic area, Juneau residents also questioned the natural factors data as well as what the sociological character of the new city might be.

In Ketchikan residents again were concerned with the costs and who would pick up what

part. The committee carefully explained the cost categories and how they were developed as well as pointing out to Ketchikan residents that the total cost questions and exact planning data was not yet developed as the committee was only mandated to select sites and the preliminary cost data was developed at the request of the legislature.

The more detailed questions were contained in CSHB 801, introduced by the committee, but not passed during the last legislature. Rep. Terry Gardner of Ketchikan expressed his community's concern over the potential move from Juneau as well as what happened on the legislature's unsuccessful attempts to amend the capital move initiative during the last session.

Sitka's Sen. Pete Meland felt the new capital would become a "permafrost Brasilia" and most other participants again expressed concerns over costs. However, some participants also asked "what does it cost to keep the capital in Juneau," and "will that be more than the move."

Under the terms of the relocation initiative the Capital Site Selection Committee selected the three sites of Willow, Larson Lake and Mt. Yenlo, all in the Susitna Valley, to present to the voters on the

November 1976 general ballot. The site receiving the most votes will become the site for the new capital. The initiative further states that the legislature will provide for the planning of the new capital city and the move is to begin no later than October 1980.