

editorial —

Gasline route

After several years of closely observing the debate between Arctic Gas and El Paso about the method of transporting Alaskan gas to the populous urban and suburban regions of America and southern Canada, the Tundra Times is relieved to note the emergence of a third, more viable, alternative in the Northwest — Alcan Pipelines proposal.

(Continued on Page 2)

editorial ...

(Continued from Page 1)

The Alcan proposal has one highly desirable attribute — it does not have any of the lethal and undesirable deficiencies of the Arctic and El Paso proposals.

Let us note the problems plaguing the Arctic route:

(1) It presents a severe challenge to the subsistence lifestyles of Alaskan and Canadian Arctic peoples — What assurance is there that the people of Kaktovik and the Mackenzie delta will be left undisturbed in the pursuit of their subsistence lifestyles? None, that we may observe.

(2) Let us not force the Canadian Native people to settle their aboriginal claims in the same frenzied, development-based turmoil in which Alaska Natives were forced to reach a land claims settlement during the 1960's and early 1970's. Before any type of Canadian pipeline system should come under serious consideration, Canadian Native claims should be fairly and thoroughly adjudicated without pressure from too-rapid development. We should know this from the Alaskan experience in resolving Native claims.

(3) Although we often do not lend much credence to the conservationist elements (special interest groups which often have little respect for the Native subsistence lifestyles, nor for the property rights of the original Canadian and Alaska Native landlords), many environmental questions about the feasibility of building the Arctic system with minimal impact on our Arctic ecosystems have not been adequately satisfied.

(4) Alaskan and Canadian Inupiat Eskimos are dependent upon migratory patterns of caribou for protein and essential nutrients. In spite of many assurances to the contrary in advance of construction of the Alyeska pipeline, Anaktuvik Pass Eskimos report disruptions in migratory patterns of the Porcupine caribou herd. We believe that there may be no guarantees of avoidance of such disruption where non-indigenous technology is massively applied against the arctic ecosystems. There are no such herds of caribou to be impacted by construction along the highway.

The El Paso route, a favorite of many Alaskans, will find it extremely difficult — we believe impossible — to overcome the lethal objections of the conservationist elements, staff recommendations of the Federal Power Commission, and the demands of more populous mid-western and eastern markets. Sound environmental concerns are concentrated about the uncertainty of implementing a technologically unproven gas transmission system involving a pipeline system, gas liquification system and LGN tanker system. The southcentral Alaska terminus proposed by El Paso has been demonstrated to be highly susceptible to earthquake danger. The El Paso system would increase tanker traffic along sealanes and near ports which state and federal officials worry may become cluttered with unsafe vessels.

Regardless of how Alaskans feel about the El Paso route, odds against its selection are tremendous and increasingly stacked against the proposal. The remaining contenders, we believe, will be Arctic and Alcan. The Tundra Times is hopeful that the decision will (1) not infringe upon the subsistence lifestyles of Alaskan and Canadian Native peoples, and allow them to continue to gather their daily ration of protein in peace, and (2) allow for the adjudication of Canadian Native land claims in a fair and equitable, orderly and comprehensive manner, and (3) allow for intelligently planned development of Alaskan resources with minimal environmental damage.

In our view, the best way to go is the Alcan route.

—T. R. j.