

Sen. Hensley Supports El Paso Gas Line

State Sen. Willie Hensley of Kotzebue, who has announced his intention to be a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives, placed himself firmly in support of a trans-Alaska natural gas pipeline recently.

Speaking to the Central District Democratic Convention in Fairbanks, Hensley said Alaska needs a trans-Alaska gas line.

"Such a line," he said, "could insure an orderly, controlled growth economy for all Alaskans."

Hensley said the proposed trans-Canadian line, on the other hand, would not provide service to Fairbanks and other Alaska cities, would not aid in the development of public, private, and Native lands, and would not provide energy resources to allow Anchorage and Fairbanks to mature their economies.

If the trans-Canada line is built, "How long will it be," he asked, "before Alaska will emerge from third world status? Is Alaska to continue as a colony, as only a supplier of raw materials, as only a treasure box for Japan, and the Lower 48?"

Hensley also questioned the validity of the figures publicized in support of the trans-Canada line. He said the stated 2,600-mile length of the line would take it only to the U.S.-Canadian border, when in fact it would have to extend 5,400 in order to carry gas into the homes of the Midwestern United States. Supporters of the trans-Canadian line claim the cost of the project would be \$5.6 billion, but Hensley said the final figure could be closely reckoned at \$8 billion.

Those in favor of the trans-Canadian line say it would produce gas for market 25 to 30 cents cheaper than a trans-Alaska line.

But Hensley said that is based on a maximum capacity of 4.5 billion cubic feet of gas per day, while 2.5 billion might be a more realistic figure to expect.

Hensley pointed out that Canada's Native land claims have yet to be settled. And he said that could mean a long delay in construction with severe consequences to Alaska's oil and gas based economy.

As the alternative, Hensley said we can opt for a trans-Alaska pipeline which would avoid the untouched Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and have the capacity to connect with other gas deposits elsewhere in the state.

Hensley said the trans-Alaska pipeline could provide fuel for Fairbanks and other Alaska cities. He said 600 permanent jobs would be created by the trans-Alaska route.

"How many will be created," he asked, "in a 300-mile stretch

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going from Prudhoe Bay into Canada?"

"With all this at stake," he said, "our Republican contingency in Washington would have us adopt a wait-and-see approach . . . I say I know which line is best for Alaska. The trans-Alaska line."

Hensley urged Central District Democrats not to let the state become "uncontrollable." "Let's prevent the Los Angelization of Alaska," he pleaded. "Let's determine our own unique Alaska lifestyle!"