

Low Ash Coal Near Cordova

COLLEGE—A coal field of as yet undetermined size near Cordova has been noted for an unusually low ash content in a report issued by the University of Alaska's Mineral Industry Research Laboratory.

Dr. P. Dharmo Rai, a research scientist at the laboratory and author of the report, explained that a low ash content "is very important to steel companies because it can increase the capacity of a steel-producing blast furnace," while at the same time reduce the volume of impurities coked coal normally introduces into a steel-making system."

The bituminous coals of the Bering River Field are currently being drilled and mapped by the Cortella Coal Company of Cordova in order to determine the extent and overall quality of the beds.

Samples tested by Rao were washed using conventional coal preparation techniques, reducing the ash content to a low two per cent.

"The Japanese," Rao pointed out, "are currently importing eight per cent of the ash coal mined in Canada."

Most blast furnaces are designed for optimal production at pre-established ash level, he said, "and use of low ash coal would increase production, as well as lower transportation costs."

The coal field, located 15 miles inland from the Gulf of Alaska, could be developed, Rao believes, "if surveys now being conducted show that 15-20 million tons of suitable coal are present."

Once mined, the coal could be shipped overland from the mine site to the gulf by means of trucks, narrow gauge railroad, or pipeline, but any development in the area will have to await the conclusion of the field surveys, Rao said.

His report, "Washability Characteristics of Low-volatile Coal from the Bering River Field, Alaska" is available by writing the Mineral Industry Research Laboratory at the University.