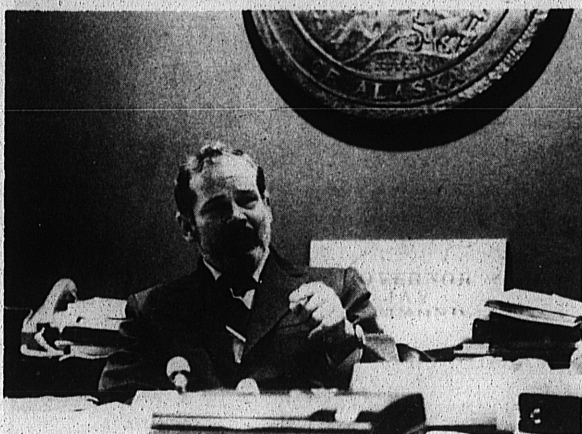


View from Behind the Governor's Desk



ALASKA GOVERNOR JAY HAMMOND

By GOVERNOR JAY HAMMOND

Events happen so fast these days, trying to report them with even perspective is difficult. Unfortunately, this Administration's point of view is sometimes refracted in editorial translation or fogged by haze from the legislative floor beneath. To help bring it into focus, it is my hope to submit a series of columns entitled "View From Behind the Governor's Desk". I appreciate the generosity of the TUNDRA TIMES in allowing me space.

Hopefully, these columns will provide food for thought. Balanced diets demand a change of pace and choice of fodder. An informed citizenry can better strain the ground glass from the gumbo.

I have just returned from giving a speech in New York and attending the National Governor's Conference in New Orleans. One of the many parameters of a governor's job is making decisions on literally hundreds of speaking engagements and invitations to conferences and meetings both in Alaska and Outside.

First the speeches. During the legislative session I turned down most invitations to speak, because my staff and I were grappling with the problems faced by every new administration. Ours, however, were compounded by the last-minute presentation of the keys to the office. That is behind us, so now I consider invitations on the basis of what help I may be to Alaska by accepting.

However, before accepting invitations to speak outside the State, I require the organization to pay my fare and expenses, or I don't go. I collect no per diem for time so spent. For example, my trip to New York to speak to EARTHCARE was paid for by the group, and as a result, largely offset the cost to the State for my fare to the Governors' Conference.

Was the EARTHCARE trek a waste of time? You be the judge: In response to my comments, representatives from several conservation groups advised they supported our advocacy of a trans-Alaska gas pipeline route as opposed to the Canadian route. Additionally, news media representatives were apprised of pipeline employment problems, and urged to advise their readers and listeners that the Alaska labor market was glutted, and thus they should stay home.

If, as a result of my New York press comments, one prospective job seeker stays home and off our welfare rolls, we are ahead. Additionally, if despite their usual differences, conservationists can be prompted to crawl into bed with the Chamber of Commerce on the trans-Alaska gas pipeline issue, perhaps Alaskans will gain for more than the usual attempts of each to short-sheet the other.

Now the Governors' Conference. No one can predict how successful a conference is going to be. Usually one is sorry if he attends, but always one is sorry if he does not. The things they do to one in absentia can be horrendous. Thus, attendance is frequently necessitated out of self defense.

Take New Orleans for example: efforts were made by some to request Congress to do everything possible to expedite pipeline construction, including calling in the National Guard. This odd-ball proposal was supplanted with a suggestion that the conference should instead support efforts to secure an additional \$300,000,000 for Alaska road maintenance necessitated by the pipeline haul.

Another proposal demanded immediate crash exploration of all Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil provinces and coal deposits, and the setting aside of any environmental impediments until full energy independence was achieved. This was amended by me to urge, instead, that a schedule for OCS development be pursued, which placed first in order of priority those OCS areas in closest proximity to the United States markets, and with the least environmental hazard.

Resistance from east coast states to OCS development in their own backyards has caused the Interior Department to schedule first those OCS areas of greatest environmental risk and distance from prospective markets such as Alaska's Gulf. This is ridiculous, and I am pleased that we were able to get all of the governors to say so.

Preventing adoption of such policies by the Nation's governors regrettably necessitates attendance.

For those who properly like to keep check on State expenditures, especially in the Governor's office, let me set the record straight: my wife attended the New Orleans conference with me, and did so at my expense, not the State's. In fact, I have paid her way whenever she travels with me, both within and without Alaska. For that matter, I pay my own way for travel within the State to events that seem more personal than official, such as inaugurals, funerals, and the commencement address for my daughters graduation.

Finally, to those who suggest the trip was more play than work: New Orleans in June (temperature 87 degrees and humidity 100 per cent) for vacation??