

GAS POWER ON FOR BARROW



BARROW GAS POWER—Former State Senator Eben Hopson of Barrow is delivering the main dedicatory speech during the recent ceremonies to dedicate two 750 KW natural gas turbines that will supply electric power at the big village of Barrow. The new facility is expected to be operated by an all-Eskimo personnel in the future.

New Facility to Be Manned by Eskimos After Training Period

A sparkling new facet of progress caught up with the people of Barrow and although complex in nature, it will eventually be operated by the Eskimos themselves.

Two 750 KW gas turbine generators were dedicated and put into motion on October 11 after impressive dedication ceremonies attended by Barrow Eskimo leaders, Bureau of Indian Affairs officials, and other dignitaries.

Eben Hopson, an Eskimo and

the executive director of the Arctic Slope Native Association, and newly elected second vice president of the Alaska Federation of Natives, a statewide native organization, was the main speaker of the dedicatory ceremonies.

"We have today," Hopson said, "electricity in every home. Ten years ago, only those who could afford to operate a small light plant had power however unstable it may have been."

"Today, we have one of the finest operated light plants in the state, and now are about to still further our progress at the starting of a brand new turbine generators."

Hopson said that after years of efforts, even through Congress, for 20 years, the residents of Barrow were finally authorized the use of natural gas.

He said it had been discouraging at times when outside opinions predicted huge gas explosions and accidents of major proportions. He said these dire

(Continued on page 6)

Barrow Gas Turbines . .

(Continued from page 1)

gas, we are entering our fifth year of operation. Certainly a clean slate on record."

"We have operated since their installation of the water treatment plant, the generation plant and the sewage treatment plant with but one or two non-natives overseeing the operation," Eben Hopson continued.

"Actual operation engineering, the mechanical work and even the payroll system is operated to the satisfaction of the General Service Administration, therefore further indicating our capabilities should we, in the near future, be given the full control and operation supervision."

At this point in his speech, Eben Hopson partially substantiated rumors that the State Department of Education would be taking over the Bureau of Indian Affairs school system in Barrow.

I envision in the future just ahead of us," he said, "a gradual move by the State to take over our educational department of the BIA. So you can guess that upon that date, the final phase-out of the BIA will be in effect.

"Before that is permitted to take place, I can see an accelerated program to further enable the Barrow Utilities Incorporated to fully control and operate the utilities section. I would also venture to say that upon that date, the BUI will be able to do so capably.

"... This is only the beginning. I envision the construction of a 100 room hotel with all the facilities of a modern hotel pushed through the Arctic Slope Native Association and the Alaska Federation of Natives.

"A tourist trade of two to three hundred per day is easily predictable within the next five years.

"Progress in the north in the development of our huge oil and gas fields cannot, and will not, overlook Barrow and the other villages in the Arctic Slope.

"We in the Alaska Federation of Natives fully intend to see that Barrow plays an important part in the development of this industry and hope to contribute to its progress from start to finish."

Eben Hopson paid tribute to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the following manner:

"Needless to say for me that the BIA has nurtured our progress and have made a substantial investment and I am sure there will be appropriate times when each of us will be given opportunity to convey our thanks to them.

"What seems to me to be the important thing is assuring the Board of Directors of the BUI and the BIA that at the time of the takeover, we have all the qualified personnel.

"I happen to know that there are people here in this room who are ready to say that we have, and I share their feeling."

Here, the speaker related a little story that pointed out the adaptability of the Eskimo in the field of mechanics:

"A foreman asked me one time if I could operate a crane. I told him I would if he showed me where the controls were and I assured him I would be able to operate one within the next the next five minutes.

"I have been a crane operator ever since.

"What I am saying here is this. All of these boys who are going to be the operators of the new turbines need only be given the opportunity to grab the controls and learn the necessary moves. I guarantee you they will never forget their lessons."

Another native speaker at the dedication ceremonies was Joseph Upicksoun. He was one of the three men from Barrow to be sent down to San Diego, Calif.

"We will be charged with helpign to carry the ball until the operators are familiar with the operation of their assigned tasks in the utility system.

"Attribute the culmination of man's achievements to education. People with education have an aversion to idleness, therefore they set a goal. Their goal is an achievement of their endeavors in improving environmental conditions," Upicksoun said.

Wallace O. Craig, superintendent of the Fairbanks District of the BIA, represented the Commissioner of Indian Affairs office

Craig had the honor of pushing the button that put the gas turbines in motion.

"Let us hope that Wallace Craig's push button finger carries as much hope for success in the starting of the new turbines," said Eben Hopson.