

# *Election Analysis—*

# **Some Reasons Why**

By CHUCK MALLEY

There are those of us who thought it would be a close race for the governor's office, but a 100-vote difference at Tundra Times Press time made it difficult to write a headline.

Both Gov. William A. Egan

and Republican challenger Jay Hammond were still reaching for the big brass ring at dawn Wednesday, but Egan had the thin edge, 37,889 to 37,779.

In the Senate race, Sen. Mike Gravel was probably breathing a sigh of relief somewhere, having

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soundly defeated C. R. Lewis, the Republican candidate.

And in the U. S. House race, Congressman Don Young of Fort Yukon appeared safely ahead of Willie Hensley, the confident Eskimo candidate from Kotzebue.

The variables affecting any election are enormous, but some should be mentioned.

Although exhibiting spark and drive in the campaign, some voters thought Egan had expended plenty of energy during 12 years in office. They looked to a new source in a relatively unknown personality — Hammond.

Six months ago many voters had never heard of the Naknek bush pilot, but here Hammond was on Nov. 5 exhibiting the same vote-getting clout that allowed him to dispatch of the

powerful Walter J. Hickel in the August primary.

The close, unfinished race reflects the philosophical turmoil Alaskans find themselves in: whether to see the state go ahead with vigorous development under Egan or to slow down with Hammond.

An approximate 50-50 vote split shows voters going nearly equally in both directions.

There definately was a feeling in Fairbanks that Egan's 12 years in the governor's chair is enough. Four more would give him 16 years of running the young state and make him nearly 65 years old.

Hammond offered a considerably younger man, a new face and the prospect of a whole new administration in Juneau. "It's his administration that hurts Egan," some voters were saying.

Others voted for Hammond because they liked the combination of the candidate with Lowell Thomas Jr. as lieutenant governor as opposed to the team of Egan and Lt. Gov. H. A. Boucher.

Boucher has not done well in the Fairbanks area as a statewide candidate.

Sen. Gravel's healthy margin over challenger C.R. Lewis indicated that voters were sure of their majority decision that the incumbent is the best man for the job.

But the old arguments continued to swirl in political talk well after the polls had closed. "My vote for Gravel was to prevent a John Birch (Lewis is a member of the John Birch Society) from getting to Washington," said one voter.

Whether his success was partly due to a defensive vote against Lewis is debatable, but surely Gravel's six years of experience in Washington had to capture some votes.

The Young-Hensley battle was not so close as it might have been, considering Hensley's excellent political background in Alaska and proven ability to be effective in office.

But Hensley is part Eskimo, a Native from Kotzebue, and in the opinion of this analysis, he suffered from a backlash directly connected with the Native Land Claims Settlement Act.

And Young, of course, had the advantage of sitting in Congress during the time that the pipeline question was being settled. The pipeline's benefits to Alaska thus were directly associated with the Fort Yukon candidate.

Lastly, it was widely felt that Hensley was hurt by a Young campaign slogan referring to Young as the candidate for "all" Alaskans, not just some. The clear implication was that Hensley was for Native Alaskans only, and this hurt his non-Native vote.