

Egan Names Ryan Commissioner

JUNEAU—Mrs. Irene Ryan, an Anchorage consulting engineer and geologist, was named by Governor William A. Egan as Commissioner of the Department of Development last week.

For Mrs. Ryan, the appointment was another in a list of firsts. She was the first woman to graduate from the New Mexico School of Mines (now the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology)—in 1940 with a bachelor of science degree in geological engineering with a mining option.

Now, she becomes the first woman to fill a commissioner's post in Alaska government.

"I'm walking this high off the ground," she said last week, waving her hand in a waist-high gesture. "It's a great honor

for a woman to be entrusted with such a high post."

Might not women's lib, someone jokingly cautioned, take her statement as excessively humble to the cause?

"I've been breaking barriers for quite a few years," she replied. "Just not in the way it's being done today."

Mrs. Ryan, a former territorial and state legislator, had operated an Anchorage consulting service in civil, mining, and petroleum engineering since 1947.

She ended her present consulting association—with Lyon Associates, Inc., of Baltimore and Anchorage—upon accepting the state commission post.

The new commissioner said she wanted to review the workings of the Department of Economic Development "a little more before I would say what it should accomplish."

She said a "boomer approach" to development "obviously is not the one that should be taken. But on the other hand, people have to live and eat and economic development is the only way to provide jobs to accomplish that. Sometimes, people overlook this."

Mrs. Ryan said it is of top importance "to diversify our economy as much as possible so that the play of market forces on any one sector of the economy doesn't damage our overall economy."

"Seattle is an example of what can happen from being too dependent on one industry."

"Next, it is important that our industry be diversified as much as possible by area, throughout the state so we won't have rich areas on one end of the scale and very poor areas on the other."