

# ***We need to develop an Energy Plan for Alaska***

By GORDON JACKSON

I was probably the only Legislative candidate last year who advocated the establishment of an Energy Policy for Alaska. I still think it should be done and soon.

I have travelled throughout the State of Alaska and worked with most agencies. I find that Alaskans plan for everything — except energy. We plan for roads, we plan for schools, we plan for land-use, we plan for delivery of food stamps, we plan for education, we plan for economic development, and others but the one thing that will keep all those things running and warm, we never plan for. That is energy.

Energy has been an issue and in the spotlight throughout Alaska the past several years. We have the largest oil field in the United States, built the longest pipeline, bought back the Katchemak Bay oil leases, advocated an increase in oil taxes, sold our natural gas before it had a pipeline, advocated an All Alaska Gas pipeline, attempted a response to the fuel crisis in rural Alaska, established a permanent fund, advocated a delay in Outer Continental Shelf activity, and many others. What policy in our State led us to those decisions?

The worst winter in a century on the east coast and mid-west will once again stir considerable interest in the establishment of a nationwide Energy Policy. This is long overdue but must point out that because of our small population and unique situation. Federal policy seldom fits Alaska.

For instance, Federal Revenue Sharing providing funds on a per capita basis to bring more control of federal dollars to local governments. Small villages numbering around 200 receive so little that it rarely helps and the requirement for an annual audit of a "piddling" amount of money is ludicrous. Another includes the Community Services Administration and the poverty guidelines. The poverty guidelines are determined in Anchorage, but in target areas where the cost of living is 30% higher, many potential participants that are clearly eligible have to be overlooked. My fear is the same may happen if Alaska waits for a Federal Energy Policy.

The beauty of a well developed policy, is it can point the state in the appropriate direction for years and planned and orderly development can proceed in a coordinated direction. Such a policy can suggest what adequate oil taxes are, a leasing policy, conservation measures, Outer Continental Shelf Policy, and many others. Finally, it can insure the development of sound strategy to insure our children are not energy poor. Part of the strategy might well be the creation of a State Energy & Natural Resources Department.

Alaska should develop their own Energy Policy. We shouldn't wait and "react" to the situation several years from now when it is a crisis. We've done that before and the results is a lot of things overlooked and wasted. For once, lets not be a reactionary state but look to the future and plan for it.