

Department of Labor finds Slope workers largely non-residents

The Alaska Department of Labor has surveyed North Slope construction firms and found a significant number of non-resident workers employed, Governor Bill Sheffield announced on March 15. Of the 2,123 workers employed by 10 companies, 600 were non-resident.

"These figures are simply not acceptable," Sheffield said. "Furthermore, with the influx of workers expected on the North Slope this spring and summer, the situation is bound to get worse."

Jim Robison, commissioner of the Department of Labor, will be meeting with representatives of the 10 companies next week, as well as with other North Slope firms. Robison also is examining the hiring record for maintenance and operations personnel of a ma-

jor oil producer and others to determine if similar problems exist there.

"I have asked Commissioner Robison to work in close cooperation with the private sector in addressing the issue of jobs for Alaskans," the Governor said. "In the past, we have assessed the workforce needs of the timber and fishing industries, and we've been very successful in getting their cooperation in putting Alaska residents to work first. We are trying to expand that effort now."

A preferential hire law for Alaskans on oil and gas development projects was enacted by the state in 1972 but struck down as unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court six years later. The state has responded with ex-

panded job training and placement programs for Alaskans, as well as with a local hire law on state-funded construction programs. That law, requiring 95 percent local hire, is currently under challenge before the Alaska Supreme Court.

"The economic problems caused by involuntary unemployment are a serious menace to the health and welfare of the people of the state," the Governor said. "When jobs open up, we need to place Alaskans in them, or train Alaskans to fill the needs of industry."

Sheffield said he was particularly concerned about reports that non-residents were being recruited for Alaska jobs through solicitations by companies in such states as Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma.