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For many of the years leading up to Alaska's statehood the Federal Government had periodic interest in converting Alaska into a penal colony. The idea seems to have started during Andrew Johnson's Administration and ran out sometime in the 1940's when Harold Ickes was Secretary of the Interior.

It's my impression that a lot of Alaskans suspect that the penal colony view, is still prevalent in Washington. The fact is that this couldn't be farther from the truth. We think of Alaska as you do, not as America's "last frontier," but as America's "great frontier."

I wouldn't be honest with you unless I told you that I envy you. Each of you is in a unique position to ensure that your state is developed in an ordered preserving the land's vital non-economic values. You are in a position to utilize the most advanced technologies to ensure that economic development is compatible with the magnificence of your environment. You are in a position to create meaningful land use plans that provide not only for orderly growth, but which will preserve the integrity of the delicate Arctic ecology.

The bigness and greatness of your land is also significant to all Americans. They own a large -- very large chunk -- of it: About 350 million acres today are under Federal management.

When President Nixon was inaugurated in 1969 no government body had yet been tasked to develop an environmentally safe plan to utilize North Slope resources. There was a "freeze order" on the leasing of Alaska lands and only five million acres had formally changed hands in fulfillment of the 103-million-acre commitment in the Statehood Act of 1958.

This afternoon I'd like to speak to you about my responsibility as trustee for the public lands in Alaska, and about our programs for Alaska's future. This trusteeship is unique because we act not only in the interest of Alaskans. But in the interest of all Americans.

We are anxious to get on with the development of oil resources on the North Slope. Since May of 1969. When President Nixon established a Federal Task Force on Alaskan Oil Development, we have taken broad and far-reaching action.

We opened the decision-making process to the public and held three significant series of' open hearings. And in this effort we consulted with every element of state and local government.

We developed the strictest environmental and technical stipulations ever drafted and organized surveillance teams to enforce these controls.

We completed a 6-volume environmental impact study in cooperation with over 20 state and federal agencies-- the most, comprehensive study of its kind.

We conducted exhaustive examinations of all feasible alternatives, including Canadian routes and other energy sources.

I have announced my decision to issue the necessary permit, and am convinced that the Trans-Alaska Pipeline is one of the most environmentally safe undertakings in American history.

Aside from that, the Pipeline is critical to our national security. It is estimated that by 1985 America will be required to import over half of our oil supply. Without the pipeline this would mean increasing dependence upon the politically unstable oil-rich nations of the Mideast -- it would mean an increased deficit in our "balance of payments – it would mean we would be increasingly subjected to vindictive pricing policies from other oil producing countries.

The Office of Emergency Preparedness, and our State Department strongly feel we must build the Trans-Alaskan. Pipeline to support national security goals, and that we cannot afford a 3 to 5 year delay inherent in the Canadian route.

As you know, the trans-Alaska matter is in the courts. Hopefully the first decision--by the trial court--will be rendered before Labor Day. No matter who wins there, the case undoubtedly will. Then go to the Court of Appeals. After that it may well go to the Supreme Court. Consequently this litigation could go for as long as a year or 18 months or even more. We must be candid in our understanding of that.

Frankly, I know that our decision 'to proceed with the pipeline is in the best national interest of the country.

We have been responsive to national needs for more energy.

We have been responsive to Alaskans' needs for avenues of economic development.

We have been responsive to needs for B balanced development of natural resources without jeopardizing the environment.

You are all aware of the impact the Trans-Alaska Pipeline will have on your state. I think the remarks of your very capable senator, Ted Stevens, before the Joint Economic Committee sum it up well.

"Twenty-two thousand jobs will be created in Alaska in connection with pipeline construction and a gross payroll of $800 million will be generated."

The Pipeline will mean unprecedented social and economic change for your State and for Alaskans.

I'm here today to tell you that we at Interior and in the Nixon Administration are proud of the conscientious fashion in which the Pipeline decision was made. Let me reaffirm that position: "God and the country willing; there will be a Pipeline."

Another area of concern I would like to distress is that of native claims and land, withdrawals. I know that for many in Alaska these are very difficult issues. The development of the Pipeline and the future economic course of this great State are inter-related to these issues.

President Nixon signed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act last December 18th bringing to an end a conflict which began in 1887.

Since that date we have taken certain actions:

We have set aside some 99 million acres from which Native groups will choose 40 million acres for their

villages and regional corporations. The remainder will be made available for state selection and federal classification.

We announced the same day the preliminary withdrawal of an additional 80 million acres to be studied as additions to the national forests, parks, wildlife refuges and wild and scenic river systems. The final withdrawal of these lands will take place by September 18th this year – and we will meet that deadline.

We have withdrawn 1.2 million acres as an addition to the existing transportation and utility corridor. This corridor runs from Prudhoe Bay to the Canadian border and will provide for several utility systems.

In the meantime I have requested recommendations from the Joint Federa1 State Land Use Planning Commission for Alaska, created by the Alaska Native Claims Act, for the optimum use of those withdrawn lands.

Under the Act, the Commission is to undertake a process of land use planning and make recommendations of areas for Federal retention; Federal and State lands to be made available for disposal and uses of lands remaining in Federal and State ownership. It also is charged with advising on proposed land selection by the State and by Alaska Natives (Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts).

Some 35 million acres of land identified by the State in January of this year are available now for state selections. The Bureau of Land Management is committed to speeding action on all formal applications by the State for these lands.

While all is not yet ready for the State of Alaska to select all the lands that make, up the remainder of the entitlement under the Statehood Act, we have taken vigorous steps toward that goal.

Just last week 17 patents were issued, to the State for 260,000 acres.

To ensure that the land withdrawals, are handled properly the Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission, headed by, Jack Horton, and authorized by the Native Claims Act will report annually to the Congress until 1976.

Your Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission provides Alaskans with a management framework to make recommendations to the State and Federal Governments, regarding the optimum use, disposal and protection of the land. Action by the Congress, actions by the Department of the Interior and future actions by the Commission will provide the foundation for an orderly land use plan for Alaska. A land use plan that will protect the interests, of the State and one that provides opportunity for its future development.

One that will protect the vast and invaluable resources of the State unmatched anywhere in the world.

One that will protect the inalienable and vested interest of the American people.

One that will protect the interests of Alaska's Native people, and their entitlement to a fair share of the land and natural resources.

At last then we are at the beginning of a new age for Alaska; an age in which conservation is matched with, progress; an age in which development is matched with equity.

As Governor Egan said, "This joint approach in planning the future' of Alaska presents an opportunity

not utilized in the development of any of the other States of the Nation."

The future of this frontier and of your children will depend upon careful and ordered planning as well a strong leadership at every level in government, in industry, and in your communities.

I would like to conclude with a few remarks directed to Alaska's most pressing problem -- your economy.

I know these last years have not been easy ones, I know that many of you have suffered from natural disasters and that the Pipeline delay has meant a lot to you not just in economic cost but in human cost.

I want to talk to you about your future and about that is happening now in our national economy.

A year ago President Nixon initiated new economic policies. He put a freeze on wages and on prices to halt spiraling inflation as well as to stimulate economic growth. We have had a year to see whether these policies would work. We have had a year to listen to political charges that they could fail, and have listened to skeptics who said America's economy was doomed.

Let us look at the record.' Recent economic reports indicate that inflation has been cut from 6.1 percent in 1969 to 2.9 percent in the last year. Over 82.6 million Americans have jobs today more than ever before. Since May of 1971 alone almost 2 and half million new Jobs have been created. Interest rates are down -- unemployment is down -- and our Gross National Product is solidly on the way up.

In short, the, President’s economic policies are working. More Americans are working and making more money today than at any previous time in American history. But more important, not only are America's workers making more money, but in contrast with any previous time, their money is buying more.

President 'Nixon and this Administration are unequivocally committed to continuing these policies for our economic prosperity.

You are at the threshold of one of the greatest undertakings in the history of our Nation -- the development of Alaska's natural and mineral resources.

It is an awesome task. A task which will provide the greatest challenge to your spirited leadership.

As I stand here before you l am convinced that you have that capacity, I am convinced that you will answer that challenge -- for Alaska's people, areas great as their State