

A Good Start Is Made at McKinley

The keynote of the just completed Alaska Resources Development meet at Mt. McKinley National Park was harmony, and great credit should go to the chairman and kingpin of the convention, Jack M. Anderson who had the tough job of piloting more than 100 delegates from all over Alaska through four days of meetings, discussion and debate.

But there was give and take on all sides and the underlying feelings was that Alaska and its future superceded any man-made snags and all efforts went toward the good of the territory and the subservience of the district and the individual.

Out of the meeting grew a new All Alaska Chamber of Commerce which will be charged with the burden of carrying on the work started at the meeting.

It was most remarkable to see persons representing known factions freely discussing their problems with former opponents and labor and management working side by side and pulling for the same ends.

Of course, the most remarkable announcement of the entire meeting was that of the Alcoa plant to be erected at Taiya near Skagway at a cost of some \$400,000,000. This is a sum almost equal to the entire amount of defense money spent in Alaska since the start of the Korean war. The actual significance of the announcement, however, was found in the fact that the entire project from the construction of the hydro-electric plant to the erection of the smelting plant and the man-made town will be done entirely with private capital. This implication transcends even the staggering money figure and the great production, figure for it means that the old bug-a-boo-lack of risk capital in Alaska has been dispelled. In the words of Mr. Leon Hickman, vice president and general counsel of the Aluminum Company of America, Alcoa came to Alaska because it wanted to, because Alaska offered many advantages among a high list of competitive sites that were being considered.

The laying on the line of nearly one-half billion dollars of private money dissipates forever the contention that Alaska is a locked-up frontier, reserved in cold storage until Washington chooses to open its doors. It dispells, too, the contention of those who would have us pushed into statehood under inadequate enabling acts, that private money will never venture here until there is a state. The Alcoa company's decision marks the third and largest private capital venture in the past few years, other notable investments being the pulp mill at Ketchikan and the plywood plant at Juneau. We are now closer to statehood than ever before and now we have a firm base upon which to set our new state.

The Alcoa news was by far the most sensational of the Mt. McKinley meet, but the meeting would have been successful from many standpoints in spite of that. The entire atmosphere was one of enthusiastic determination to get something done for Alaska—not just one section or one district—but all of Alaska and it was the feeling of the delegates that just that had been accomplished.

It was a wise decision to elect Mr. Anderson president of the new All Alaska Chamber of Commerce, for he, with the assistance of his capable staff, has demonstrated that he has the know-how for developing a new organization. It is rare indeed in these busy times, to discover a man who has the fortitude to give so much of his time and energies to a public cause.