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Jay Hammond ... [et al.]

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Fairbanks, Alaska

"Town forum"

B.G. Olson, head of the Journalism Dept. at UAF

B.G. Olson introduces participants in the town forum: Jay Hammond, Richard Burton, Commissioner of Public Safety, Andy Warwick, Commissioner of Administration, L.A. Tony Motley, Commissioner of Commerce, Avrum Gross, Attorney General, Lee McAnerny, Commissioner of Community and Regional Affairs, Guy Martin, Commissioner of Natural Resources and Ernst Miller, Commissioner of Environmental Conservation. B.G. Olson explained the process for the evening's program. He invites people to phone in questions. He asked Jay Hammond about his back problem.

Jay Hammond said he would like to express his appreciation for the hospitality in Fairbanks and it has been an enjoyable trip. He said the criminal justice system has been under stress in Fairbanks for a while. The court calendar is overcrowded. Judges in Fairbanks have been working hard and are hard pressed to keep up with cases. The situation on the streets of Fairbanks has become serious. The slowdown of the pipeline work has caused people to come into Fairbanks. The environment has changed. He said the basic function of the government is to maintain safety and security for its citizens and that is what they plan to do. He has taken steps to alleviate the present crisis. The basic problem lies in the tremendous increase in criminal cases. Extra superior court judges will be sent to Fairbanks. Prosecutors will also be sent to Fairbanks as well as public defenders. He thanks Judge Bob Boochever for his help. Additional troopers will be on patrol. The Fairbanks Police Dept. is adding city patrolmen and new ordinances have been created.

John Newdorf asked Governor Hammond about the school situation in North Pole. He talked about overcrowding in the classrooms where students outnumbered desks in the classroom. Hammond said the solution lies at the local school board level. The state furnishes the funding of the majority of the education function. He said North Pole needs representation on the borough school board.

B.G. Olson reads a question for Guy Martin from Janet Baird. She asked about using royalties for Alaska Farmers Co-op and Farmland. Guy Martin said they have issued several public statements about the proposal. It proposes to buy some of the royalty gas and use it as a basis for a plant which would make fertilizer for Alaska's agricultural industry. He said the problem is the plant would have to be so large that it would be making more fertilizer than we can use here in Alaska. He is enthusiastic about the proposal.

Governor Hammond is asked about controlling big labor. Governor Hammond said he is dismayed by anything overly large and powerful such as big business, big government or big labor. He said there are

federal statutes on big labor, but there isn't a lot that can be done at the state level. Av Gross said there are federal laws that control unions. The unions in this state have enormous monies and pension funds. The state can treat labor the same way it treats everyone else as far as the laws are concerned. Governor Hammond said he told leaders of big labor that they would be treated the same way as everyone else in the state. He thinks they have improved relations with the unions in the state.

Peter Roy asked Andy Warwick about a verbal commitment for a job level. Andy Warwick said he talked with Mr. Parr about his job. This was a discussion about the man's personal complaint. Andy Warwick suggested the use of an outside arbitrator.

B.G. Olson suggested to the listening audience that questions could be kept at a non-personal level. Andy Warwick commented on the previous caller's grievance.

Charlie Newell asked Av Gross about legal rights for the average citizen and suggested a pamphlet be published about rights. Av Gross said there is material published by the Office of Child Advocacy as well as the Alaska Legal Services. There are private organizations which publish such materials. He said that is a pretty good idea. Charles Newell asked if a law school would be started at the university. Unidentified person said that has been a debate that has gone on for many years, but there is no plan at this time. A criminal justice degree is offered.

Ron Richards asked Governor Hammond about development and said he is not in favor of it. Governor Hammond said there are large numbers of people who also believe this. They are concerned about conveying land to individuals. He asked Guy Martin to comment. Guy Martin said they are putting together a new program to make land available to individuals that will not allow speculation. The problem is they could not have a durational residency requirement. They also hope to have land sales that will frustrate large buyers and rather have small tracts for sale. Ron Richards asked about BLM plans for corridors. Mr. Martin said they would oppose the corridors and would rather see planning before the establishment of the corridors. Ron Richards said the growth philosophy is not always the best philosophy. He would prefer to see the gas pipeline underground. Governor Hammond said most if not all of the gas pipeline would be buried.

B.G. Olson suggested that callers keep their comments to one minute with no follow up questions.

Elizabeth Cook asked Mr. Motley about problems with auto insurance and other kinds of casualty insurance. Mr. Motley said it is a problem and it is a nationwide problem. The insurance companies have seen their profits diminish and they are getting rid of certain lines of insurance. They are well aware of the problem and they are taking steps to alleviate the problem. He invited Mrs. Cook to call his office for further help.

A question about plea bargain is read. Mr. Gross said years ago they had plea bargaining to get a conviction. Now they are insisting now that the cases are better. If you can't prove something you can't be charged with something. The police and D.A.s are making better cases. Mr. Gross has a consumer complaint question. He said people can write him directly if they feel they are not treated correctly by the consumer protection division.

There is a question for Governor Hammond about local use of North Slope gas. Governor Hammond said Guy Martin is a Chairman of the Gas Royalty Board and he turns the response over to him. Guy Martin said in the contracts we have the right to take back the gas at some later time if needed. They are not losing the control of the gas in the future. They are doing a comprehensive study about the best uses that are beneficial for the state.

There is a question for Governor Hammond about the Haul Road and tariffs. Governor Hammond said there is nothing assured how user fees will be applied. The fees will not be applied for at least a year. All of the proposals will be evaluated.

Governor Hammond is asked about the National Guard in Alaska. Governor Hammond said the Guard has been impressive. He was in Bethel when the power plant was on fire and the guard responded well to the situation. He would like to make it even more of a viable program. He said indoctrination of women into the guard in the rural areas has been impressive.

Sam Demientieff asked about Native allotments. He said there was bickering between people at fish camps and in the past there was never a problem. Governor said there is an obligation to identify parcels of lands within the conveyances. He laments the fact they are faced with rules and regulations. The Native Land Claims is a federal program.

Mr. Fox asked about boat launching facilities in the local area. Governor Hammond said that is a question for the Dept. of Highways.

Dale Durwalker asked about the Alaska teacher's retirement system security? Mr. Warwick said the retirement systems are funded not at a hundred percent of their liability but at a substantial portion. Part of the problem is when benefits are increased they are retroactive to retired employees. The retirement systems appear to be not totally funded on paper.

Harding Smith said he has seen he has seen the big game dwindle and was concerned about state supervisors being on strike last year while laws were being broken such as 18 moose being killed by one person. Dick Burton said that is the first he has heard about the incident. There is a problem with resources and manpower to cover the state. Unidentified person said the fish and game protection officers did not participate in the strike.

Ken Martin asked if the vacancies on the psychologist's licensing board will be filled soon. Governor Hammond said one of his staff is almost full time for that reason. There have been thousands of vacancies to be filled. Tony Motley said there was a bill last year to place laymen to be placed on the various boards.

There was a question for Governor Hammond about the city government won't commit themselves to a larger police force what can ordinary citizens do. Governor Hammond said he hoped they would petition their local government entity or the police department.

Grant Darrel asked about wind energy production. Governor Hammond said there are three pilot projects (Nelson Lagoon, Cold Bay, and Kotzebue). They are being pursued and will be evaluated and he is excited about wind energy generation especially in rural area.

There was a question about the state sale of royalty gas and oil. Mr. Martin said basically they are pursuing the question of the sale of royalty gas. They have made nationwide solicitations to see if there they can find people to buy the royalty oil or gas and use it for constructive purposes in Alaska. There have been offers like the construction of the fertilizer plant, adding to the supply of oil for the North Pole refinery, and the Tesora refinery. They must determine if they are of benefit to the state of Alaska.

There was a question about an easement on the land between the Yukon Bridge and Stevens Village for hunting and fishing. Governor Hammond said the Interior Dept. has issued regulations providing for the retention of corridors, but he didn't know about that area. Martin said if it is an area that has been in use it may be identified. He invited the caller to send him a letter about areas of protection.

There was a question for Muller about regulations at the North Star Borough dump. Mr. Muller said the dump has been a problem for years. They are looking at alternative long term sites. The primary problem is a lack of land fill material. There have not been specific complaints to his unit. There were comments about sea gulls and airports.

Richard Redburn asked if all the revenues are coming from the pipeline why haven't state income taxes gone down. Governor Hammond said we are borrowing on future revenues. They are borrowing from taxes on oil reserves.

Roger Huntington asked if the state will maintain roads that have been constructed by state funds such as those constructed under local service roads and trails program. Governor Hammond said state roads are a state maintenance obligation. Roads constructed by local service roads and trails are recipients of revenue sharing.

Jim Johnson said he is a member of the Alaska National Guard in Fairbanks and it is functioning very well.

There was a question about the court case of Cook Inlet Land Exchange for Gross. Gross said it was argued in the Superior Court in Anchorage.