

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

HUNTLY SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT MONITORING PROJECT

RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

Number 9: 6 December 1976

Subject: FAIRBANKS, ALASKA: MONITORING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE
CONSTRUCTION OF THE TRANS ALASKA PIPELINE

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While the literature on social and economic impacts of development projects is beginning to accumulate at a more rapid pace, most studies simply report on results of impact at particular points in time. The Impact Information Center in Fairbanks, Alaska, is one of the few examples of regular reporting of changes in a community over a period of time. The Center was set up in April 1974 (at the same time as construction began on the Trans Alaska Pipeline) and has reported regularly since then. A related programme was organised early in 1975 through the Fairbanks Town and Village Association for Development to report on rural impacts in the region. Although both programmes were set up as community information centres, they have essentially performed the task of monitoring social and economic changes in an extreme impact situation.

This report is compiled as an attempt to extract from the Fairbanks experience some ideas that may be of value in monitoring social and economic impacts elsewhere. It is based on a stay of only one week in Fairbanks in August 1976, during which wide ranging discussions were held with Sue Fison, present director of the Impact Information Center, Mim Dixon, a former director, Gene Straatmeyer, Presbyterian Minister, and former chairman of both the Social Concerns Committee of the Fairbanks Council of Churches and the Impact Advisory Committee for the Impact Information Center, Jerry Smetzer, executive director of Fairbanks Town and Village Association for Development which administers development programmes for the much wider area of Fairbanks Economic District, Larry Carpenter, Community Relations Officer for the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company (the consortium formed to construct the pipeline), and various other Fairbanks residents. While I have quoted freely from all these informants, all interpretations are mine. There was also some variation in ideas about how effectively the Center operated and in attitudes toward impact of pipeline construction on Fairbanks.

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