

vehicles emitting exhaust fumes which may quickly push this natural condition to a point where there is a real hazard to health. Thus human activity has exceeded the physical or environmental carrying capacity of the area in this respect. In the same way there are definite physical limits to the capacities of utilities systems such as water supply, sewerage treatment, telephone networks, all of which were only just adequate prior to pipeline construction. They are now severely overloaded.

The idea of carrying capacity does not necessarily mean that there are simple, finite limits to the stress that can be borne. The physical capacities of utilities systems can be expanded. But there are economic limits in terms of finance available to cope with such expansion, both in terms of actual cash in hand and how much extra the local community is able or prepared to pay. Local taxes are rarely adequate to pay for the extra facilities required for a sudden influx of population. Thus severe stresses may be placed on local institutions in providing the services they are normally expected to provide in terms of finance, personnel and expertise.

Jerry Smetzer, surveying the economy of the Fairbanks district, the rapid changes brought about by the pipeline and the prospects of continued growth if a gas line is constructed, commented:

These findings clearly suggest that massive public investment in new and vastly expanded public facilities must be initiated rapidly in order to meet the quantum leaps in the demand for public services. To defer these public investments means that their costs - which are almost beyond the limits of political acceptance already - will rapidly escalate beyond state and local governments' actual financial ability to absorb them. More precisely, given the institutional and political reluctance to confront this problem directly, it is likely that present levels of service will simply deteriorate to the point where the community can no longer guarantee clean water, public safety, basic health, telephone, electricity, school buildings, roads etc, at a price the average citizen can afford.

Obviously some profound questions of public policy are wrapped up in this issue, and they are not necessarily unique in this case to Fairbanks.