

Smetzer likened the Fairbanks situation to the "so-called Boom Town phenomena in the Western United States" and quoted a statement made by the Denver Research Institute: "An annual growth rate of 10 percent strains local service capabilities. Above 15 percent seems to cause breakdowns in local and regional institutions." There is a real dilemma that on the one hand the greatest inputs need to be made "at the front end" of the impact situation to prepare for the influx of population. On the other hand, such inputs require accurate prediction of impact effects. For example, the Alyeska-sponsored social and economic impact study predicted peak direct project employment levels on the pipeline in 1975 around 6,500; the actual figure in 1975 exceeded 23,000. It was also predicted that school rolls would increase but there was nowhere near the expected increase for the project attracted a large number of single workers and family men left their wives and children behind. Some say it is impossible to plan for impact. However, the comment was also made that it was obvious that there was already pressure on housing, water and sewerage, and telephones in Fairbanks before the pipeline, so that any further influx of people would inevitably cause stress. Larry Carpenter commented:

You ask how to predict problems before they occur - that is a Herculean task. However, as a rule of thumb, you can inventory the existing community problems in the pre-impact period and anticipate that they will be the most serious problems during the impact period. Impact here in Fairbanks simply compounded our existing problems.

All the sorts of stresses outlined add up to a great deal of personal and community stress which is expressed in various ways. Decision-makers at all levels are often confronted with impossible work loads. A city attorney arrested earlier in the year for beating up his wife is reported to have commented "The last two years have been the hardest of my life". Some have profited from higher incomes from the pipeline, have bought new homes, paid off mortgages and gained other material benefits. But some, in the midst of new affluence, have also felt that something was lost. For others the high wages simply meant more regular drinking and better class prostitutes. It is also very difficult to assess the family stresses that have occurred as a result of breadwinners of a family being away working on the pipeline for long periods.