

## Editorial —

# District 16 Election

With what is perhaps the strangest set of circumstances surrounding any election in recent Alaskan history, the question of who will represent the voters of District 16 in the State House of Representatives will be decided in a special election March 1. State Representative Nels A. Anderson, Jr., who held the seat during the Ninth Alaska Legislature, is waging an energetic write-in campaign to return to Juneau.

Anderson, a Democrat from Dillingham, lost the 1976 primary election to former Rep. Joe McGill (D-Dillingham) by some 170 votes. He began an intensive write-in campaign during the general election to reverse the results of the primary and defeated McGill in that election by 45 votes. However, Anderson's opponent mounted a legal challenge to that victory and successfully obtained a ruling from Superior Court Judge Allen Compton that the general election be declared invalid due to improper actions by well-meaning yet unknowing election officials. In the meantime, Governor Jay Hammond has appointed Independent Martin Severson of Naknek to fill the seat on an interim basis.

In view of the circumstances, the appointment of Severson by the Governor was probably the only proper action he could take. However, the situation on the whole has created a wrinkle in plans of rural Alaska legislators to wield highly significant influence in recent organization of the House.

Anderson has run one difficult campaign previously in District 16 during the 1974 election, when he defeated McGill by some 25 votes in the primary election, only to be faced with a fierce write-in campaign from McGill which began two weeks prior to the general election and which Anderson overcame by a mere 75 votes. While McGill has done well in Dillingham and King Salmon, Anderson has received very strong support from the numerous small villages in District 16, which includes villages of the lower Kuskokwim coastal area and Bristol Bay, should return Anderson to the State House where he can once again effectively lead the caucus of rural Alaskan legislators.

We believe that Nels Anderson deserves the support of District 16 for the simple reason that he is the hardest working legislator we have seen in the State House in some time, perhaps not since Nick Begich was in Juneau. The gains of rural Alaska under Anderson's leadership during the Ninth Alaska Legislature are extremely impressive: two good subsistence bills (the state now needs good regulations to implement their intent), the \$59 million school bond issue for rural school construction, prevention of excessive taxation on Native corporations and rural resource development, appropriation of funds to help fishermen fill out limited entry application forms, seating of a representative from the Yukon-Kuskokwim area on the Fisherman's fund board, decentralization of the State Operated Schools system, appropriation of \$5

(Continued on Page 8)

# District 16 Election

(Continued from Page 2)

million to install village telephones, increasing fathoms of net allowance for many rural Alaska fishermen, and the passage of an economic disaster area bill to stimulate economy in rural areas in the event of poor fishing seasons.

These and many other gains for the rural Alaska areas were possible largely because of the hard work and dedication of Nels Anderson. The tenth Alaska Legislature seems off to a slow and confused start — District 16 and all of Alaska needs Nels Anderson back in Juneau to help get the show back on the road.

We urge the people of the villages of the lower Kuskokwim coastal area and the Bay to write-in Nels Anderson's name of the ballot on March 1. In order to avoid the problems of the last election, voters are reminded not to pass out stickers or leave stickers within 100 feet of voting areas. Free long distance calls for voter information in District 16 may be made by asking the long distance operator for ZENITH 5200. District 16 voters may also cast absentee votes in the special election. Absentee ballots are available from election offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau and Nome.

—T. R. j.