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Address of Honorable Ernest Gruening  
United States Senator  
Before the Alaska State Legislature  
April 2, 1968

"Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Fellow Legislators, Fellow-Public Servants:

I greatly appreciate your invitation to address the Alaska legislature. It awakens warm nostalgic feelings. For, as you know, this is by no means the first or only time I have addressed an Alaska legislature. As Governor it was my privilege as well as duty to do so nine times, to seven regular biennial sessions, and to two extraordinary sessions of Territorial legislatures and then, subsequently, by invitation, to other legislative sessions when I was no longer Governor.

However, this is the first time I am addressing the Alaska legislature in its remodelled, improved, enlarged, and thoroughly functional chambers. These are appropriately enhanced quarters suited to the needs, responsibilities, and dignity of a State legislature. I congratulate you and those who, in preceding legislatures, voted to go first-class.

In this connection, I may say that I likewise wish to congratulate Governor Hickel in going first-class, not only in his third-floor offices, but in the Governor's mansion. I applaud him for providing there some comfortable and attractive apartments on the mansion's top floor for visiting guests, thus providing a high quality of hospitality which we rightfully deem an Alaskan characteristic. And, retrospectively, I regret that I did not have the vision and sense during my thirteen year governorship to install a Sauna which now helps preserve the health and vigor of the incumbent executive. I doubt, however, whether a Territorial legislature could have provided the needed funds for an appointed Territorial Governor such as I was. But if I were ever to go back there, even if only in fancy, I might raise my sights to install an indoor swimming pool. Why not? There's one in the White House. But, the point I wish to make in commenting on these useful, as well as tasteful, enhancements of both legislative and executive environment which are not luxuries but promote efficiency, is that the government of the 49th State has commendably gone first-class.

Going first-class, I suggest, should not stop here but should be our goal throughout Alaskan society. To do this we need both the purpose and the means and it should be our joint endeavor to supply the means.

Obviously this represents, and will increasingly represent, change - desirable change. Most of you have, on one occasion or another, heard me recall that when I first came to Alaska as governor, deeply thrilled, since my earlier visits as Director of Territories, with the unparalleled beauty, splendor and potentials of Alaska, I was startled to observe so many people leaving.

They were folks who had done well here, had amassed a competence in some business, the proceeds of which they were then taking with them, or had already invested "outside".

This puzzled me and I began to inquire:

"Why do you leave?", I would ask.

With almost uniformity the reply would embody that there were certain advantages "down below" which were not available in Alaska at that time. Their teen-age daughter could get dancing lessons, then not supplied here. Their thirteen year old boy could enjoy sports not then available, including the use of an indoor swimming pool in the high school to which he would go next year. The answer, of course, to stem such an exodus, was, I concluded, to use the homely housekeeping phrase, for Alaska to "put more butter in the cake", to make life fuller and richer here and determine that what was considered good and desirable "outside" should likewise be considered suitable for Alaska. That, at that time, involved a change in most Alaskans' attitudes. I will confess that an indoor swimming pool in every high school has become a sort of crusade with me since, both as a symbol and for its manifest benefits. And the break-through, at long last, has begun by the inclusion for the first time in Alaska of a great indoor pool in the new Blatchley Junior High School in Sitka. I hope that it will set a precedent for an indoor swimming pool in every new high school. I shall continue to work for that goal.

To go first-class on every level of our Alaskan society is merely to raise our sights, to seek those goals of abundance and achievement for all, to which all Americans naturally aspire. They are summarized in the word progress, in itself historically a relatively recent and New World concept, though views may differ as to what constitutes progress. I can enumerate some of the obvious objectives briefly. Full employment, which, in turn, means the development of our resources which will give that employment, better and equally available educational opportunities to train Alaskans for the new jobs. Improved transportation. Better living conditions, which includes better housing, better community facilities. Attainment of these goals requires the joint effort of all the agencies of government on all levels, federal, state, borough, municipal, the coupling of both federal and state executive and legislative action, and the active cooperation of private enterprise. Before touching on these varied fields of inviting endeavor, which may be projected as a program for our state for the years ahead, it would be well to explore briefly the special and to a degree unique conditions which characterize Alaska, to sort out the pros and cons, the favorable and unfavorable aspects of some of the circumstances which affect the 49th State as they do no other State. Some of these reflections may seem to restate the obvious, but I recall Justice Oliver Wendall Holmes's utterance that "reassertion of the obvious is often more desirable than elucidation of the obscure", and no realistic search for the solution of our problems and the attainment of our needs and desires is possible without such analysis as a point of departure.

Physically Alaska confronts the basic facts of vast extent, isolated to a degree from the rest of the nation, separated from it by a foreign country and international waters, with a sparse and widely scattered population.

What we should realize is that these are not by any means all debits. They are and can be also assets if we choose, with imagination and energy, to make them so.

For example, our high seasonality gives us, uniquely under the American flag, the long summer days with recreational potentials not found in any other State. They give us the midnight sun. Conversely, they give us, when the days are short, the celestial fireworks of the Aurora Borealis. No other state can match these as tourist attractions and as soul lifters.

We possess an unspoiled wilderness of unrivalled dimensions, the continent's loftiest peaks, that unique juxtaposition of mountain and ocean found here as nowhere else in America. Many people love the mountains; many love the sea. Some states have neither. We in Alaska not only have both, but we have them together.

In this still largely virgin country we have the most varied and abundant supply of terrestrial and marine wildlife on the North American continent. To conserve these natural legacies is one of our primary tasks and one to which Alaskans are wholly predisposed.

Our geographical position has given us the unique role of being the air-cross-ways of the northern hemisphere. Through our gateway pass the people of its three continents. We must seek to hold them here as tourists and as possible investors. This potential is only in its infancy.

Our geographical position plus our primary natural resources have enabled Alaska - uniquely again - to initiate a trade with a foreign country, Japan, and prospectively with the whole Orient. This, too, is in its infancy, and credit should be given to those Alaskan who have initiated and promoted this unparalleled relationship between a single State of the Union and other lands.

This much is among the obvious that balances what may be unfavorable in our appraisal of our future.

However, it is chiefly in the area of governmental relations that we need exploration and understanding. Our history has made these relations significant and different from the intergovernmental relations of the contiguous states.

They differ here because of much that was established by unilateral federal action in earlier Territorial days, and which despite statehood, persists. Our federal-state relations have a unique ambivalence. We owe much to the federal government. We have received much from the federal government. We expect to receive much from the federal government. These assertions scarcely require illustrations. Outstanding examples are the unprecedentedly favorable provisions of the Statehood Act and of the subsequent Omnibus Act, in the federal aids to education - so well illustrated right here in Juneau by the fine audiovisual equipment and the planetarium in the Juneau-Douglas High School; in the federal aids to airport and highway construction, river and harbor projects; in the assistance for hospital construction under Hill-Burton or Hill-Harris legislation about to be

April 2, 1968

taken advantage of locally; in the federal loan and grant aid to various projects, public and private; in the dramatic and generous measures to relieve earthquake and flood disasters. And there is much else.

But on the other hand are the impositions and restrictions placed upon us by ukases of distant federal officialdom, and the rules imposed, not always to the satisfaction of Alaskans and often adverse to our interest, in the enclaves of federal ownership or in the fields of federal authority in our midst.

There are other inheritances of our days of colonialism against which we chafe and the possibility of relief from which we must fully explore. The Jones Act is a specific example of a law that is harmful to Alaska - one of its provisions in Article 27 - the two words "excluding Alaska" - was a residue of our colonial servitude as a Territory - but the whole Act is unfavorable to Alaska, although we understand the reasons for its enactment as a protection of certain legitimate American interests. Governor Hickel's action in challenging it was in one of the best American traditions - to wit the Boston Tea Party, and closer to home and more recent, the Cordova Coal Party, when, resentful of the then Secretary of the Interior's preventing the mining of Alaskan coal and leaving only the alternative of costlier, imported British Columbia coal, Cordovans proceeded to dump the coal into the harbor. I might add as an interesting historical footnote that this action was led by the then Mayor of Cordova, Austin E. Lathrop, subsequently one of Alaska's outstanding industrialists and later Republican National Committeeman. No auspices for the Cordovans action could have been more respectable! The Governor's action was by no means so drastic, but I think it was helpful to me and to Senator Bartlett in getting a modification of the Jones Act enabling us to use our Southeastern and Canadian ferries for freight, in legislation enacted by the Senate in the last session of the Congress. It is now awaiting action in the House of Representatives.

Here we find one example - and there are others - where the fulfillment of Alaska's destiny requires independent action, which may bring us into conflict with other states' interests. We skirted recently, and I am confident, we obviated, such a situation in the issue of exporting unprocessed round logs from the Tongass and Chugach National Forests.

But these instances point to the type of exploration and remedial action that we ought to pursue. We must remember that our physical remoteness and isolation is also, to a degree, a political isolation. When a prairie State - the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas - or one of the mountain States - Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Nevada - have a federally related problem, it becomes generally a common problem for all of them, and they all mobilize as a phalanx, putting the combined power of their several Congressional delegations behind federal legislative or executive action.

The drive against chronic poverty, lack of economic opportunity and general backwardness in Appalachia is supported by a dozen States from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, reaching from the Atlantic west to the Mississippi River, and they are states with large House delegations. Alaska has its equivalent to Appalachia with similar conditions of poverty and lack of opportunity, in an area physically almost as large as

April 2, 1968

Appalachia but politically dependent on one State's Congressional delegation. It is precisely this Alaskan Appalachia in Westward Alaska that is the object of the Native claims legislation now pending in the Congress and in the Alaska legislature on which the first hearings were at my instigation held in Anchorage in February by the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. I know of no more vital or pressing issue before us, and we must jointly move with all dispatch to resolve it with justice to all Alaskan. This important legislation likewise illustrates the complexities of our federal-state relations.

A searching study of them is required to ascertain whether either by joint legislative or court action we can remove those vestiges of discrimination which are injurious to our State, when such action appears feasible.

In the brief decade of statehood, we have come very far. But it is not my purpose to look back. The past is essentially useful as a guide to present and future action and it is with the present and the future with which we much concern ourselves.

Obviously we need an all-embracing program for economic social development, one that would raise our standards of living, aim for full employment, furnish equal educational opportunities, improve our housing and health facilities and make every effort to reduce the cost of living, which is one of Alaska's obstacles to development which repels many would-be new residents and tends to cause many Alaskans, when they retire, to leave Alaska. In pursuit of this overall objective, I might list some of its special fields in a 12 Point Program.

1. TOURISM. A far greater tourist development is desirable. Our airlines whose own interest is well served thereby have already done much. Northern Consolidated has transferred Katmai National Monument into an attractive resort. Tourism in the Arctic - in Barrow, Kotzebue and Nome - has been established by Wien and Alaska Airlines. The latter is further developing Bell Island Hot Springs and the Alyeska ski resort. Development of winter sports is needed to diminish our seasonal disadvantage and to move toward a year-round tourist industry. Every effort should be made to persuade other airlines to act similarly and the recent airline mergers in Alaska improve these prospects. Here, also, the Federal government has been and can be increasingly helpful. After many years of effort, I was able to persuade the National Park Service to build tourist facilities in Glacier Bay, thereby abandoning, in the case of Alaska, its elsewhere prevailing practice of insisting that the concessionaire both build and operate the facilities - which is financially impossible in Alaska considering the relative shortness of our tourist season. We should try to persuade the Forest Service to adopt a similar policy in connection with its proposal to develop a year-round facility near Mendenhall Glacier for which it published a magnificent brochure several years ago with no takers. Indeed, there were not even nibbles, for the obvious reason that caused the National Park Service to change its policy in Glacier Bay. Here, too, we might be able to persuade one of our airlines to be helpful. The National Park Service has become enthusiastic about my proposal to build a National Parkway around the Chitina Valley and through the Skolai Pass, to connect the Gulf of Alaska area with the Alaska Highway. This proposal, I feel, is a better way to make that grandiose area, with the most superlative scenery on the North American continent, available to tourism, than to make out of it a National Park in which mining would be prohibited under the present fixed

National Park Service policy. A National Parkway would have all of the advantages and none of the disadvantages that would go with making this area a National Park. I have requested the inclusion of the several Alaska gold rush trails in the National Trails Bill and the study of these is promised and their inclusion, I am confident, assured. This will be a further tourist attraction.

2. CONSERVATION. A noncomitant though, in a sense, unrelated activity and important per se has to do with conservation. We must stop the pollution of our waters wherever it has begun and prevent its appearing elsewhere. Unfortunately, there is some already. One of the present assumptions, widely held, is that because we are a young, new state, we are not subject to the abuses and befouling of the environment that affects the older states that have had a longer time in which to spoil their surroundings. A corollary of that assumption is that we shall have the wisdom to learn by the experience of other states and not make the same mistakes. That may be a pious hope, but, unless we act, it will be a hope unfulfilled. We are fortunate in having in Alaska on the campus of the University an environmental complex which includes the trained personnel to help guide us. As your Senator, it was possible for me to get the federal government to designate that a water pollution laboratory be constructed at the University. I was able to do this by amending the bill in committee to separate Alaska from the Northwest Region in which it had been included and make it a separate Region entitled to one of the seven laboratories. On the subject of pollution in Alaska, I might say, parenthetically, that the prescribed conditions set forth in a recent letter to Governor Hickel by Secretary of the Interior Udall, are not wholly practicable in terms of Alaska. Placer mining would have apparently been eliminated by their application, although the procedure of placer mining does not and need not constitute pollution. My protest and subsequent meetings with the Secretary of the group of knowledgeable Alaskans will, I am confident, enable us to prevent pollution without damage to our economy. Here was brought out one more interesting illustration that Alaska is different and that laws and regulations made for the 48 older states are not necessarily suitable to Alaska. In Alaska we can prevent pollution by wise State action and federal cooperation without limiting desirable industrial development.

3. TRANSPORTATION. We should press forward to improve and augment all forms of transportation. We shall need federal funds in addition to the money already appropriated. When the present freeze, caused by the war, subsidies, and I, for one am confident that this war will be over in a year despite pessimistic forecasts that it might last 5 or 10 years, these additional highway funds will then become available. Among the impending needs are four important bridges - the Turnagain Crossing; the Knik Arm Crossing; one to connect Sitka with Mr. Edgecumbe; and one to connect Ketchikan with Gravina Island, and probably another bridge between Juneau and Douglas Island. (Let me say that my expression of confidence in an early conclusion to the war was made when I drafted these remarks last week, before the dramatic developments of the past few days.)

4. RELATIONS WITH CANADA. Related to this is a closer and

special relationship with Western Canada, with the Province of British Columbia and Yukon Territory since both our land and marine highway routes pass through their territory. It should develop into an Alaska-Canada relationship analogous to that which we are developing with Japan. Transportation and recreation will be important aspects thereof. We need to connect Skagway with the continental highway system and develop the highway up the Stikine or Iskut, so as to connect Wrangell and Petersburg also. Another aspect of Alaska-Canada relations would deal with the use of the Yukon's waters for hydro development, either for Tarya or Rampart, or both.

5. HYDROPOWER. In that connection, we should develop other sources of our hydro-power. Less than one percent of it in Alaska is now developed. The State, the R.E.A., the boroughs, the municipalities, along with the newly created Alaska Power Authority, should work to develop this scarcely tapped resource which would both add to the comfort of living and bring down its cost. Grid systems for the railbelt and for Southeastern Alaska are in prospect. The program announced by the OEO to bring electricity to our rural Native communities should be implemented and expanded as rapidly as possible.

6. MINING. We should stimulate mining. Our national supply of minerals is increasingly inadequate for our needs. We are more and more dependent on imports with a worsening of our balance of payments. We know that many of these needed minerals exist in Alaska, but their quantity and locations are in doubt. We should contrast the seven times greater than ours mining activity in adjacent Yukon Territory and in the upper third of British Columbia - an area smaller than Alaska but with a similar geologic structure. The Canadian incentives, which are to be largely credited with the greater mining activity, are worth emulating to the extent that we can do so as a State. As chairman of the Interior Committee's subcommittee on Minerals, Materials, and Fuels, I was able to secure, in the 89th Congress, legislation very helpful to mineral exploration. It abolished the previous \$400,000 limit that could be deducted for exploration and makes it unlimited. But there is other help for mining I know we can get from federal agencies - for which I shall continue to work.

7. FISHERIES. In our fisheries - long our leading industry - we should be adamant in opposing any further foreign encroachments into our waters to the extent that we can do so. Obviously, we cannot prevent foreign fishing outside of the 12-mile limit but we need not assist it by extending shore facilities to foreign fishermen. Hearings before my Subcommittee on Foreign Aid Expenditures of the Senate Government Operations Committee disclosed that our AID program had given several million dollars to Korea in boats, gear and training to develop its fisheries. I shall oppose any further such expenditure in behalf of foreign fisheries which are likely to compete with ours. We should, likewise, encourage the entry of our own fishermen into fisheries hitherto unexploited by them, such as bottom fishing. I have asked the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries of the Fish and Wildlife Service to make a study of its possibilities for Alaska. The developments in Alaska of the King Crab and shrimp fishery are stimulating examples of development of fisheries in Alaskan waters that we previously neglected.

8. BEEF CATTLE INDUSTRY. We should help our struggling cattlemen on Kodiak, the Kenai Peninsula and elsewhere to develop a

beef industry. Legislation recently enacted by the United States Senate providing longer grazing leases should be helpful. This too awaits action in the House of Representatives. But we need the commercial facilities for slaughtering the animals and for preparing them for market in Alaska and perhaps in the Orient.

9. EDUCATION. Education and democracy are one and inseparable. Apart from national defense and the maintenance of law and order, no obligation is more imperative in a free nation than education. Alaska has done well in this field, and should continue to strive for still higher standards and the extension of secondary education into remote communities where only the lower grades are taught. The regional high school program should be expanded. A noncomitant and related activity has to do with public libraries whose presence in a community and whose quality is a measure of its enlightenment. Public libraries are important adjuncts to education, not merely for school-age pupils, but for adults. At my request the President's Advisory Committee of Libraries came to Alaska last year and is preparing its report on needs in the State.

10. HEALTH. The 89th Congress made a great contribution to health when it enacted medicare. The program can still be improved and we in the Congress shall work at it. Meanwhile, we should make every effort in Alaska to supply our communities with adequate hospital facilities to take advantage fully of that federal aid. Both Juneau and Fairbanks are in process of utilizing federal legislation of the Hill-Burton and Hill-Harris Acts. Wrangell has already done it, Soldotna is moving to do so, and, in varying degree, all of our communities should be encouraged to do likewise.

11. FUR SEAL RESOURCES. The fur seal resources of the Pribilof Islands should, in all fairness be managed by the State of Alaska. This is the only instance in the United States where a State has been deprived by the Federal Government of the management and control of a natural resource located wholly within that State's borders. The management of the valuable Pribilof fur seal resources can be and should be turned over to the State of Alaska by the Department of the Interior. Recent events demonstrate that the State could far better manage this resource than the Department. The resource management functions can be carried out without in any way impairing the role of the Department of State in dealing with foreign participants in the seal skin harvest. Alaskans should be trained to do the processing, thus furnishing additional local employment. I have discussed this with Governor Hickel who has approved such transfer in principle and with Secretary Udall who has agreed to have the problem of the transfer studied.

12. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR DEPRESSED AREAS. All these previously stated desirable objectives in varying degree share economic development as a common denominator. I have just within the past week been appointed Chairman of the Subcommittee on Economic Development of the Senate Committee on Public Works. This Subcommittee was created to oversee the functioning of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 and the Appalachian Regional Development Act. As I pointed out earlier, we have the equivalent of Appalachia in Alaska. Title 5 of the Public Works and Economic Development Act contains a provision for the establishment of Regional Action Planning Commissions. The Secretary of Commerce

working with the governor and other officials of the State, must find certain qualifying conditions. The conditions include, among others, that the rate of unemployment be substantially above the national rate, that the median level of family income is significantly below the national median, that the level of housing, health and educational facilities is substantially below the national level. Such conditions are certainly typical of Western Alaska. It is my purpose to use the full resources of this Subcommittee on Economic Development to bear on these conditions wherever they exist in Alaska.

These are but a few suggestions for a program as we look ahead into our second century under the American Flag - a century full of hope and promise for those particularly fortunate Americans who are also Alaskans.

I want to thank you for the honor and privilege of addressing you; and to wish you the greatest success in your part of the great assignment to which we are all dedicated - of making Democracy work and of striving to make our beloved Alaska as great in quality and performance as it is in its physical dimensions."