

Delegate From Alaska Not Overly Impressed By Bird's Achievement

By CHARLES P. STEWART
Central Press Staff Writer

Washington, Dec. 19.—Living 1,000 miles nearer to the north pole (as he does) than anyone else in congress Delegate Dan A. Sutherland of Alaska, naturally is the national legislature's foremost authority concerning such activities as Commander Dick Byrd's at the southern end of the earth's axis. Maybe it is only fair to expect a note of jealousy in his voice, as he refers to the young explorer's recent visit to the globe's austral hub.



Delegate DAN A. SUTHERLAND

It is there, anyway. Alaska's delegate takes an obvious pride in his territory's neighboring North Pole and inclines to speak of its rival a trifle slighting, as Chicagoans do of Kansas City or St. Louis archbishops, or Californians of Florida's fruit industry.

For example, Delegate Sutherland plainly presents the suggestion that the Antarctic is a more difficult region to penetrate than the Arctic.

"I believe the facts are just the contrary," he told me. "My understanding is that deep water is to be found up to the very face of the southern ice barrier, so that an exploring party can land in a stone's throw from

its ship, and operate from it at its convenience.

"In the Arctic the ocean shoals so gradually (except at one point in northern Greenland) that vessels are compelled to keep a good many miles off shore, making it difficult to pitch a land camp anywhere overlooking the polar basin. On the other hand, ice prevents navigation to the northward. Thus expeditions, aerial or over land, are much longer range than in the Arctic."

How do flying conditions compare?—the top of the world's with the bottom. The Byrd explorers mention mighty uncertain weather—while Alaska has been advertised as an ideal aviator's country. "Don't confuse Alaska with the Arctic ocean," replied the delegate.

"Alaska is fine for flying, certainly—generally clear air, vast expanses of level tundra for forced landings (away from the southern mountain ranges) and plenty of soft snow to fall into in winter, if machines do crash. "But the ocean is different—blizzards the greater part of the year, on short notice; freezing fogs the rest of the time."

No mountains, however, to jockey a plane over—or to crack it up, if an emergency descent becomes necessary.

"But nothing safer than ice to descend onto," answered the Alaskan.

Well, how about ice? It must

be pretty thick. Or is it too rough? "A flyer might land on a pan," admitted the delegate, "but he would want to be precious sure he could take off again. A big pan is level enough, but a man atop could not get far without encountering endless ridges and hummocks—almost impossible to travel over. A stranded explorer is in hard luck in the Arctic."

In summer, too? "Too soft then," said the territorial spokesman. "Summer is no time for tramping in high latitudes. The sun shines constantly, remember. Every thing at the surface is thawing."

It sounds warmer than descriptions of the South Pole. "No explorer I ever met said so," rejoined the delegate, "and I've known a number, including Amundsen, who was familiar with both poles."

Well, at any rate, they do say that the South Pole is too frigid for animal or plant life, and is it not true that both are to be found in the North Polar area?

"There is land at the South Pole," countered the Juneau representative, "and visitors there are able to see that hardly any vegetation grows on it. Alaska supports plant life, but all about the vicinity of the North Pole is water; of course that has none."

"As for animals, there is sea life in the north—and in the south, too, I hear. There are no northern land animals."

What! no bears? "Oh, well, yes; polar bears," conceded the Alaskan, "but a polar bear is not properly a land animal. He spends practically his entire existence on sea ice. Fish are his habitat. He hardly ever is seen ashore."

"Perhaps that is why he is miss-

G. O. P. Leader



Senator Wesley L. Jones, above, of Washington, has been chosen to act as Republican leader in the Senate during the absence from Washington of Senator James E. Watson of Indiana, now in Florida recuperating his health.

ing from Antarctica—a continent; it would not suit him."

Suppose a dispute should arise over questions of national ownership in Antarctica, as has been hinted at between America and the British. Are there any Arctic precedents?

"The only one I am aware of indicates," said the delegate, "that there is very little interest in the subject."

"Some years ago Stefansson established a small colony of fur hunters on Wrangell island, off Siberia. The soviet government took all its members off and landed them at Vladivostok. They included some Alaskan natives (American citizens), so I took the matter up with the state department."

"While it was pending the Red Cross repatriated the wife, and Secretary Hughes dropped the case, either to avoid seeming to recognize the Bolsheviks or because he thought Wrangell island not worth arguing over."

What if valuable mineral deposits should be found in Antarctica? "A geological report is just

what I've been waiting for," said Delegate Sutherland. "That might start a first-class controversy."

Would mining be practicable in such a region? "Mining is practicable in Alaska," answered the delegate, "through hundreds of feet of solidly frozen earth—still frozen, as deeply as human beings ever have dug into it—frozen clear to bed rock, undoubtedly."

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