

Putting Alaska and Yukon on track

Rails to Resources

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"Alaska and the neighboring Yukon Territory in Canada are still North America's last untapped storehouse of mineral and natural resource wealth," Senator Murkowski writes in a backgrounder to his bill. "We now know where much of that treasure lies — economic transportation to get the materials to market being the chief impediment to its development."

What's more, the Senator is as knowledgeable about this untapped storehouse of mineral wealth as any of our readers. He cites a mineral zone extending from Faro, Yukon to Fairbanks, Alaska, that hosts the Fort Knox gold mine and the the Pogo gold deposits, as well as large amounts of silver, tungsten, copper, lead, zinc and other minerals.

"On the Alaska side of the border, there are already more than 14 major hardrock deposits identified, while in the Yukon there are more than 10 major mineral deposits known," the Senator notes.

The Senator also points out that a railroad could lead to development of high-quality coal deposits at Point Lay, along with mineral deposits in the Amber mining district to the southeast. He argues that a 90-mile line could carry this low-pollution coal to the Red Dog mine where an existing haul road would carry it to tidewater.

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Small wonder we rubbed our eyes and checked the date again. The missive was not penned by a senator with the same name in 1900 or 1920, or even 1960. It was written this year to explain S.2253, *the Rails to Resources Act of 2000*. And yet it was a document of its time — one that calls for values other than economic ones to be carefully considered before the first rail spike is driven.

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A railroad initiative could provide enormous benefits to Northerners if done right. And it *must be done right* from the start, because there will be fierce opposition from vocal preservationists who view the North as their personal wilderness.

Despite the challenges, the fears of a few should not be allowed to overshadow healthy debate among resource developers, local governments and residents, aboriginal groups, fair-minded environmentalists and other stakeholders. Senator Murkowski's proposal deserves an open and honest hearing.

COMMENTARY

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However, MAC predicts that, unless the industry takes further measures, the sector's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions will be 5.6% above 1990 levels by 2010, assuming a modest 1%-per-year growth rate in the mining industry.

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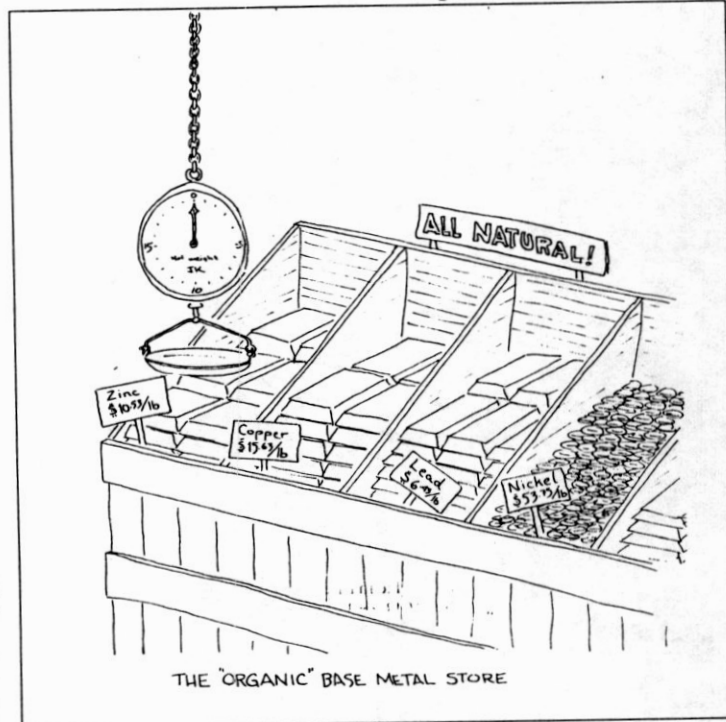
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— *The preceding was written by the Ottawa, Ont.-based Mining Association of Canada.*



THE "ORGANIC" BASE METAL STORE

ODDS 'N' SODS

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The Bridge River mines played a significant role in B.C.'s mining heritage. They provided direct employment for more than 600 miners through the Great Depression and 30 years thereafter.

The veins at the mines were spectacular structures — continuous and consistent in dip and strike — that contained millions of ounces of gold and silver.

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The price of gold may be low today at \$273 per oz., however, the old-timers performed minor miracles at the \$10-per-oz. level back in those times.

— *The author, a retired mining engineer, resides in Vancouver, B.C.*



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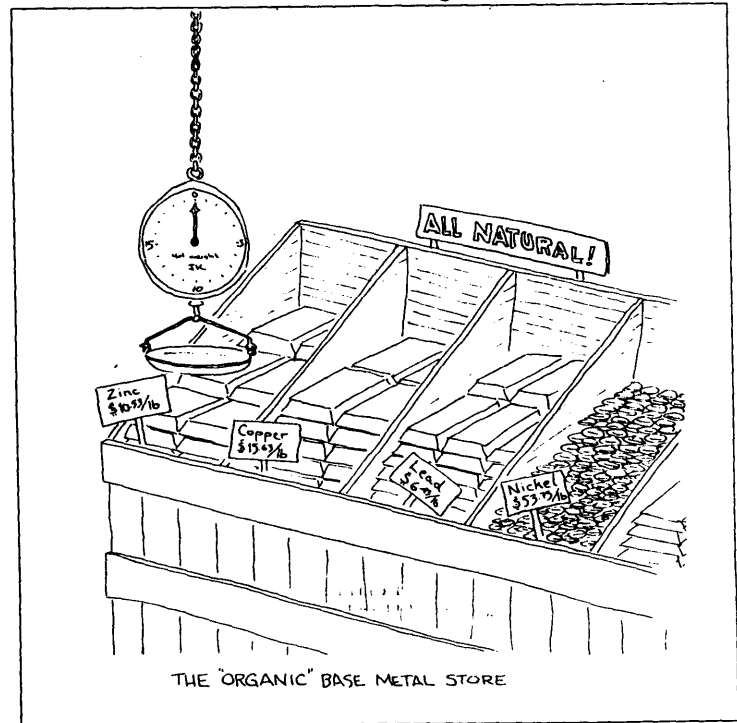
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