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A Conference on the Future of Alaska – Eberhard

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Notes: Original on 7 inch reel. Master copy on CD.

Eberhard begins by stating that Steven Brent from the Anchorage Daily News indirectly accused him of speaking in the abstract. Eberhard says that is probably true because he discussed how the first portion of the presentation would have to be abstract in order to stretch minds to see the city as a systems opportunity. Eberhard tells a story about a lecturer teaching Moses [From the Bible]. He starts by telling a story about a conversation he had with his wife [Louis] a few years ago. Eberhard says they have four children. The story is about change being inevitable. He relates the inevitability of change in Alaska. He says for a collection of people, it should be possible to hedge some of the bets with respect to some of the changes that will occur. Eberhard reads a brief quotation from Robert Oppenheimer [Physicist] about the change in life. Eberhard says change is likely to come in quantum jumps for Alaska. Eberhard then lists some of the forces he believes are at work that will inevitably bring about change in the technology of building urban places.

At 8:25. First Eberhard says he wants to look at the thing called city and explore what the basic inventions are that man has made in the last century or so that has changed the physical form for that city. The discovery of steel and its reduction to frames. The next invention was the elevator; people are not likely to walk up buildings really high. The next invention was indoor plumbing. The next invention was the discovery of electricity and light. The next invention is the telephone to make it possible for people to communicate without having to be face to face. He discusses the invention of the automobile and subway. Eberhard says every one of those inventions has been reduced to practice in 12 years between 1880 and 1892. He says there has not been a new invention that has changed the physical character of what a city is. Eberhard names a list of different institutions that people usually turn to for city planning. Eberhard predicts that there will be another wave of inventions like the ones between 1880 and 1892 that are going to change the physical hardware systems of urban places. Eberhard begins to discuss the history of invention. The automobile wasn't invented by people in the railroad business, the airplane wasn't invented by people in the automobile business, and the computer wasn't invented by people in the business equipment business. He says every time there has been a major invention there has been an invasion. Another force at work affecting urban planning is population explosion. He says 15 years ago, most architects had commissions to design elementary schools, then middle schools, then high schools, then junior colleges. When that generation graduates they are going to want churches and businesses. He says we don't have models to organize large scale activity. And if it is done by people who have no concern for the quality of life, then Eberhard will not be happy. Eberhard reads a paragraph about technology from the book "The Age of Discontinuity" by Peter

Drucker. Eberhard says he wanted to read that paragraph because it had a list of modern industries. He says people in Alaska are blessed because their economy is not based on the industries he mentioned. He says Alaska has a chance to leapfrog many of the states in the Lower 48 because Alaska has a chance to build a new industrial base on the new knowledge industries. He says if you are going to build a future of Alaska on knowledge industries, the oil can provide money. The last force that Eberhard says he sees at work is one he thinks Alaska has in spades. He says there will be adventurous men who will move to the city and start businesses. The industrious competence that Eberhard says he is talking about is building urban communities. He says Ed Higbee's statistics of 75 cities being built in the United States should be taken with a grain of salt because they technically might be new in the sense that they have never been there before, but they are not essentially new in concept. They are using the same hardware systems from 1880-1892. He shows the crowd an article that shows a city of the future. He says that is rubbish because why would anyone design a new product with a new process. He discusses Henry Ford introducing mass production and the idea that he would pay his workers five dollars a day. He discusses the streets are parked in Buffalo with trash under the cars. A problem is how to pick up the trash because a street sweeper can't reach under the car. He says the first alternative available to the state of Alaska is to do nothing. The second is to do nothing about the man-made environment. There is also the plan to plan new cities and replace the old cities. He says the product approach has limitations that are no longer necessary. Eberhard discusses NASA and what was done systematically to find solutions to getting a satellite into space. The recording is cut off as Eberhard talks about the components of finding ways for the space program to get to outer space.