



# Anchorage Daily News

**Michael J. Sexton** President and Publisher  
**Patrick Dougherty** Senior Vice President & Editor  
**Matt Zencey** Editorial Page Editor

Founded in 1946 by Norman C. Brown

Fuller A. Cowell, Publisher, 1993-1999 Katherine Fanning, Editor and Publisher, 1971-1983  
Gerald E. Grilly, Publisher, 1984-1993 Lawrence Fanning, Editor and Publisher, 1967-1971

## Arctic resources are key to the future

The planting of a Russian flag at the North Pole on Aug. 2 was as symbolic for the Arctic as Sputnik was for space. It awakened the world to the vast resource potential of the Far North, a reality that has been ignored by most world leaders and the media.

Arthur Chilingarov led the expedition. An Arctic explorer and a leader in the Russian Duma, Chilingarov chairs the noncommercial partnership that oversees the Northern Sea Route, a panel on which I serve.

The flag planting was a daring gambit. In two mini-sub, Chilingarov and his team descended two miles beneath the surface of the polar sea. With a remote-controlled device, they captured soil samples they hope will prove the North Pole is part of Russia's continental shelf and owned by them.

For a long time, I have seen this era coming. I call it "The Day of the Arctic." In the June 1973 Reader's Digest I wrote "The world's power center is destined to shift from the Middle East to the Arctic," predicting hundreds of billions of barrels of oil would be discovered in the high Arctic and hundreds of trillions of cubic feet of natural gas.

"The Arctic is a perfect location for a storehouse of wealth," I explained. "And what a storehouse, for everything from mineral resources to the rarer resources of natural beauty and wildlife — perhaps the most precious of all, in the long run. They will refresh the spirit of man as long as he inhabits earth."

Worldwide reaction to the Russian flag-planting was predictable. Most of the other Arctic nations responded with Cold War posturing. Let's not repeat that folly.

I have worked to build trust with Russia's leaders since serving in President Nixon's cabinet in 1969 and 1970. In D.C., I



**WALLY HICKEL**  
COMMENT

got to know Anatoly Dobrynin, Russia's ambassador to the United States who served in that capacity for 12 years. It is my belief that in the 1980s Dobrynin helped persuade Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev to abandon Communism and find a new road for Russia's future.

In several meetings with the ambassador, we spoke about the Alaska economic/political system, based on our constitution that requires us to use our commonly owned lands and resources for the betterment of our people. I saw Alaska then, as I do now, as a model for how Russia, a vast commonly owned country, can discover its own path to democracy.

Since then I have worked with dozens of Russian governors in The Northern Forum and more recently with Russia's top scientists and economists through the Institute of the North. My message is "Why war? War is just a big project. Why not big projects that unite us?"

For example, if the Russians open the Northern Sea Route, it will benefit the world by saving days of seaborne travel between the Pacific and Atlantic. And a Bering Strait tunnel can unite Russia and America as a symbol that we can work together for mutual benefit.

In mid-October here in Anchorage some of these concepts will be advanced.

*Worldwide reaction to the Russian flag-planting was predictable. Most of the other Arctic nations responded with Cold War posturing. Let's not repeat that folly.*

World leaders will meet at the Arctic Energy Summit, an International Polar Year event organized by the Institute of the North. Hundreds of papers on new energy technologies will be presented as we explore how to improve living standards for people even in the most remote regions of the Arctic.

The president of Iceland, Olafur Grimsson, will keynote the conference along with Gov. Sarah Palin and Canadian Minister of Natural Resources Gary Lunn. Grimsson will talk about his vision of a "New North" based on active cooperation among people who share a life of hardship in extremely cold weather. And two of my closest friends, Russian academicians Evgeny Velikov and Alexander Granberg, will share their ideas and perspectives.

Nearly all Arctic flags will be here. It's significant that Alaska's "eight stars of gold on a field of blue" is convening some of the most visionary individuals from throughout the North to explore many of our greatest challenges and opportunities.

Walter J. Hickel served as governor of Alaska from 1966-1968 and from 1990-1994 and as U.S. secretary of the Interior from 1969-1970. He is the founder of the Institute of the North. For information on the Arctic Energy Summit, contact [www.institutenorth.org](http://www.institutenorth.org).