

# Commerce Dept. Responds to Call For Native Hire

In response to a call from Senator E. L. Bartlett that all federal agencies operating in Alaska develop programs to bring about higher levels of native employment, the U. S. Department of Commerce reported that it was actively recruiting native employees for three of its programs.

The Commerce Department was the first of the eight federal departments contacted by Senator Bartlett to respond to the inquiry.

Wade B. Ropp, deputy director of personnel for the department, told the Senator that the department was training 13 natives to be hired as meteorologist technicians.

The department employs 109 meteorologist technicians or weather observers. Ropp reported that there was an annual turnover of about 20 weather observers a year, which would create future employment openings.

"The Commerce Department has learned what Alaskans have known for a long time. It makes more sense to hire Alaskans who will stay on the job than to hire out-of-staters who come and go at government expense," Bartlett said.

Ropp also said that there

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were employment opportunities for Alaska natives as members of the department's Coast and Geodetic Survey vessel which operates out of Seattle charting Alaskan waters.

Under the President's back-to-school program, the Commerce Department hires high school students for \$1.90 an hour for 16 hours a week. Robb said. The department also conducts student co-operative programs in which employees divide their time between work and study leading to better paying jobs.

Bartlett said the department's efforts to encourage native hire were "most encouraging" and established a target at which other government agencies should shoot.

The Senator contacted federal agencies active in Alaska after a study of federal employment in the state indicated that while native people made up one-fifth of the state's population, they held only one-tenth of the jobs.

Bartlett called upon the agencies to implement the three recommendations made in the study. The recommendations were:

To review their equal employment opportunity programs.

To modify those programs to bring about higher levels of native employment.

To establish target levels of minority employment by June 30.

The study was made by the Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska.