

Hippler's views fantasy

To the Editor:

Professor Art Hippler writes about Alaska Natives and their villages: "What government has done is to encourage people to live in uneconomic places, given them every possible thing, infantilized them beyond the dreams of the most ambitious totalitarian dictator, had them pay for little or nothing and hence wind up demoralized and useless even to themselves."

This description is utter fantasy, a kind of social darwinist cartoon. The assumption that Alaska Natives remain in villages to reap the benefits of inept government services is ludicrous; they remain despite the failings of those services.

While Alaska Natives seek their livelihoods in the same private and public job market that other Alaskans engage, Professor Hippler owes his University livelihood to govern-

ment subsidized research of Alaska Natives in village Alaska. If there is a residual problem arising from government subsidy of village life, Hippler is the only potential victim who comes to mind. No Alaska Native is so entirely dependent on government resources directed to Bush Alaska; no Alaska Native would dare to be so dependent on such an uncertain benefactor.

Hippler finds it a pity that Alaska Natives were not allowed to disappear into urban slums as a kind of cheap labor ripe for exploitation in much the way of South American Indians. Luckily, generations of non-Native Alaskans from the days of the gold rush have argued for a different conclusion: that Alaska Natives join the larger society as self-sustaining members with their identity and pride intact.

Today, the accomplishments

Alaska Native professionals and Native-owned business fuel the prosperity we enjoy; this is the fruit of a policy that has allowed for adaptation and not merely subjugation. Native capitalists practice a religion that Hippler only preaches.

Hippler's romantic attachment to social darwinism and his deeply ingrained self-pity over treatment by his personal devils, "the liberals," have stripped away any vestige of respect once due him as a student of Alaska Native life.

His infantilization is such that he should include his academic accomplishments in Bush Alaska in the past tense along with his past tense attachments to civil liberties and the truth.

Sincerely,

Stephen Conn

Director of Bush Justice Studies

Gear AFN to young too

To the Editor:

With the AFN Convention rapidly approaching I submit some comments and a suggestion regarding the agenda.

—The Tundra Times Banquet is considered the social highlight of the convention. Yet the number accommodated and the price per ticket preclude many from attending—usually those people from rural areas who are neither corporation nor political leaders, nor well-to-do.

—Last year, the Subsistence Dance—its meaning self-explanatory—was supposedly going to be a "dry" event out of respect for those villages that had voted "dry," and for the traditional subsistence lifestyle. Yet it was not. The Dance also, supposedly, was for "everyone." By serving alcohol and charging \$15 per ticket the sponsors effectively eliminated attendance by a great number

of people, i.e. those young people under the legal drinking age; those young and old who in subsisting off the land, could not afford the price; and all those whose traditional cultural lifestyles do not include the use of alcohol.

—Much noticed and discussed at the convention was the ever-present large number of very young and adolescent children milling about the lobbies. Having spoken with many of them, I received the distinct impression that there wasn't anything really geared to this age group. Although the convention seems primarily to be a business and political forum, it is also presumably held for the benefit of *all* Alaska Natives. Why then are the future leaders of our communities, business and corporations left out? Surely this is an important time for them

to be learning also—on their level—the issues that are not taught in school?

—Perhaps a coordinated effort at a large potluck, "dry," where anyone can attend, everyone would donate—time, food, dancing, music, would be an idea? I know some splinter groups did that last year but I mean an *AFN Potluck* in a large hall for young and old, in the spirit of the convention.

—Perhaps a small informal seminar at the beginning of the agenda, especially for those young adults and children interested in the issues but without the basics to understand all the legalese and discussion?

Some thought for including more of the people who are the Spirit of ANCSA, 1991, Tundra Times, and the Alaska Federation of Natives.

Sincerely,

Lynda Craig