

BOOK REVIEW

By WALLY OLSON

Alaska: Promises to Keep

By Robert Weeden, Houghton Mifflin Co. 1978 \$9.95

From the very opening, Robert Weeden tells the reader that this is a book by a person concerned with Alaska's future and its environment. If it sometimes turns out a little one-sided, the reader has been warned. But for the most part he tries to be fair to many points of view.

After reading and then re-reading the book, I asked myself "What is he trying to accomplish?" In just seventeen pages he ranges across Alaskan prehistory and history "From Landbridge to Pipeline". The contrasts between urban and rural Alaska are set out in thirty-four pages. Evidently, this is not a definitive study of any one topic. Then I started to count up all the question marks, and it became apparent what he had in mind: he wants to shake up a few people in their thinking about the future of our State. If that was his goal, he has succeeded quite well.

The statistics that he sets out seem to be more provocative than really convincing. I'm sure that those more interested in industrial development could add a few figures of their own to balance off those presented here. But what he has done has shown us that there are some hard questions to be asked and by simply ignoring them, they won't disappear. We have to face up to some facts and look at the past and the future. Political campaign slogans are over — for a while at least — and now it is time to look at the realities of what can be done, what must be done, and what may turn out to be beneficial or disastrous.

No matter where one sits — on the side of environmental conservation or industrial development — this book stimulates a little of our gray matter. Granted, it does not lay out the economic future in terms of jobs and income as well as it does potential dangers to the environment, but does at least give some respect to both sides.

For those involved, or even interested in planning for future generations of Alaskans, the book is well worth the reading.