

Roger Lang Speaks Out

ANCHORAGE — Alaska Natives chose the isolation of the north for their home thousands of years ago and modern man is now threatening not only their isolation but their very existence, according to Roger Lang, who spoke on the philosophy of Alaska development during a symposium here Feb. 20.

Sponsored by the American Society for Public Administration, the conference

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(Continued from Page 1)

and the systems aren't necessarily considering the needs of the people."

Lang spoke after Walt Parker, Alaska Commissioner for Highways, and Dr. Robert Hiatt, president of the University of Alaska. Lang introduced himself as a person responsible for "managing change at the pace of the people I represent."

"The most volatile issue for Alaska Natives is the National need for Alaska oil and the groups of people moving into rural areas of the state to extract that resource," Lang said. "Everything that comes with development of natural resources brings vast impact on Native people."

Lang emphasized his concern for systems developed and kept merely because nobody is willing to change them. He said a lot of the problems occurring in Alaska today would be worked out a lot faster if people weren't so committed to antiquated systems which are little more than copies of systems elsewhere.

"We have our own ideas about resources development," Lang added, "and we have a number of things which we can contribute and we'll do it with or without assistance from others."

Hiatt addressed the new attitude of the University of Alaska, which has begun a process of de-centralization to meet rural Native needs. Hiatt indicated that "the new bush interest is healthy" with regard to higher education.

"I am willing to commit myself to the proposition that the greatest contribution of the United States will someday be recognized in the mass institution we now call education," Hiatt said. "But the university attitude toward rural education must undergo a major overhaul."

The new direction of the University of Alaska coincides

with a proposal due to go before the Alaska Legislature soon calling for the establishment of a vice-president for Native education with the U of A and an increase on rural education through centrally located learning centers. The proposal was developed by the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Alaska Native Foundation.

During a recent meeting of the AFN Human Resources committee, Melvin Charlie expressed a high regard for the proposal but abstained from voting to endorse it because of past attitudes toward the Tanana Chiefs Council when it went to the U of A for assistance with the now operational Land Claims College in Fairbanks.