

Hammond deplores Thomas' remarks but will keep him on

Last week, Alaska Governor Jay Hammond issued the following statement regarding remarks made by Lt. Gov. Lowell Thomas, Jr. concerning interracial marriage. Thomas has apologized for saying he was opposed to such marriages and insisted that these highly personal views have never influenced any public act--

Ed.

After several years of serving with him in the Legislature, I concluded Lowell Thomas was one of the most decent, dedicated, hard-working, compassionate and honest public servants I'd been privileged to meet. For this reason I urged

him to join me as a teammate during our first election effort.

Certainly I decry prejudice of any sort, whether racial, religious, sexist, philosophical or even partisan. Lamentably most of us, however, have within our nature a bit of taint. How we contain it is what really counts. Does it so infect our nature as to damage others? Or do we suppress and rise above it? That really is the question. In Lowell's case the answer is self evident; his concern for minorities, the oppressed and the disadvantaged has been evidenced time and again throughout his

public service.

In his acknowledgement that some interracial marriages went against his nature, Lowell was not condoning but rather foolishly, yet honestly, confessing a prejudice in which he takes no pride. No more than Jimmy Carter's honest but perhaps foolish confession that he's "lusted after women" should be used to conclude that the President philandered should Lowell's confession be used to conclude that he's a blatant red necked racist. His public service record clearly demonstrates that such is not the case.

Only those who can honestly rummage through their own basic natures and find no imperfections have every right to cast self-righteous stones at Lowell in that regard. The rest of us do not.

Thus, to the extent that his "confession" was thoughtless and divisive, I deplore it. To the extent that it was honest, I respect, if not commend, him.

The fact that he's afflicted with a self-acknowledged blemish of the human spirit is no reason for us fellow sinners to condemn him as a man. As a politician, of course, what he did

was unthinkable; he told the truth about himself, no matter what the consequences.

Some urge me to demand Lowell's resignation. This I will not do for he, like myself, is elected by the people. It is for them to decide whether he has served them ill or well.

Though perhaps some such politically expedient denouncement might win me points in certain quarters, I'll not try to climb to re-election on ladder rungs comprised of Lowell's bones or those of any other who makes an honest but politically foolish error. For me to demand Lowell's resignation would be to falsely indicate that I believe Lowell Thomas to be other than what he is: a decent, dedicated, hard-working, compassionate, and honest public servant.