

Excerpted from the book *Alaska's Constitutional Convention*, written by Vic Fischer, one of the delegates to the 1955-56 convention held at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. When the book was published in 1975, Fischer was the Director of the Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research at the UA in Anchorage. He later served in the Alaska Legislature and is now retired in Anchorage, I believe.

From pp 140&141:

"In drafting the section on education, the committee included language that covered a standard feature of past and present statehood enabling bills, namely that 'provision shall be made for the establishment and maintenance of a system of public schools which shall be open to all children of said state and free from sectarian control.'

"The only significant point raised in plenary consideration of the committee proposal was a suggested amendment to insert the words 'and indirect' after 'direct' in the draft provision 'No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.' Proponents of the proposed amendment stressed the importance of protecting the integrity of public education, while its opponents argued for the provision of services to the individual student if otherwise in keeping with the constitution. The proponents of the amendment to prohibit 'direct and indirect' aid to parochial and other private schools held that sectarian segregation in education is bad for school children and that inadequate restriction could lead to diversion of funds and weakening of public education. A majority (thirty-four to nineteen) opposed the amendment, agreeing with those who argued that more important than these considerations was the need to help each child attain the fullest level of individual development through programs such as free lunches, bus transportation, and even payment by the state welfare agency of room and board to parentless children, so long as the basic principle of separation of church and state was maintained."