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DRAFT
K. Hecht
Nov. 11, 1977

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

In 1975, Senate Bill 35 was passed by the Alaska Legislature.[1] That act led to the organization of 21 Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs) in the Unorganized Borough of rural Alaska. This was followed by the election of school boards in January and February. 1975. The REAA Boards assumed their full powers in July 1 that same year. These few simple facts represent a great event in Alaskan history. It was seen by many as the culmination of a struggle for local control of education and the beginning of an opportunity to provide quality education for all Alaskan children.

This report reflects both the sense of completion and the excitement of initiation. The first purpose of the report is to complete an analysis process begun by the Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER) in 1973. It will fulfill CNER's obligation to follow up on the results of its 1974 report to the Alaska Legislature on Pre-Higher Education in the Unorganized Borough: Analysis and Recommendations.[2] As a follow-up study, this report examines the implementation of legislation which the 1973-74 research activities helped to generate.

The second purpose of this report is to describe the first year of operation of twenty-one regional school districts and elected school boards in rural Alaska. The impetus for this historic happening developed in rural Alaska with its mostly Native populations and grew in strength in

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[1] SB35 or Senate Bill 35 is the popular name for State Laws of Alaska, Chapter No. 124 as amended by FCCS HCS CSSB 35, 1975.

[2] Darnell, Frank; Hecht, Kathryn, and Orvik, James. PRE-HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNORGANIZED BOROUGH: Analysis and Recommendations. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska, Center for Northern Educational Research, 1974.

the early seventies. Most often described as an issue of local control, this movement spoke to phasing out the Alaska State Operated School System (ASOSS) and obtaining control through school boards elected by and responsible to local communities. Local control was desired as a means--a means to improve the quality of education by making it more responsive to local needs. Therefore the passage of SB 35 and the creation of the REAAs can be viewed as the beginning of local control of education in rural Alaska.

The achievement of the means, as these events signified, does not necessarily assure the desired end--quality education. In speaking to this point as well as those mentioned above, CNER hopes to record significant events as well as focus constructive attention on the REAAs as the latest phase in Alaska's evolving educational system.

The REAAs constitute twenty-one different emerging educational systems, each influenced by a different set of conditions--cultural, economic and geographic. The diverse conditions encompass factors unique to the logging camps in southeast Alaska; the widely separated islands of the Aleutians; the vast areas of the interior; and the northwest coast. Local control was intended to allow educational development to adapt to these widely differing situations. The experiences of any one REAA could be predicted to be unique in at least some aspects. Ideally, therefore, a study of the first year should include a sub-study on each REAA. Limited staff and resources, coupled with the time and distances involved in Alaskan travel, did not allow this study even to approximate this ideal.

Two methods were selected to meet the report purposes within the limitations described above. First, CNER project staff sought data for

the report by direct means, such as questionnaires and a case study, and by collecting already existing public information such as board minutes and newspaper clippings. Second, CNER invited others in the state, who had investigated an aspect of REAA development, to contribute their findings to this report. This invitation was offered as a vehicle to more widely disseminate their findings, as well as a way of beginning to integrate statewide interests and findings. Those working on related studies within CNER made similar contributions to the report. This latter approach gave this report a far more comprehensive character than it would have had without such cooperation.

It must be stressed that this report is limited in scope and, consequently, it raises as many questions as it answers. It will be successful if it furthers interest and dialogue. Hopefully, it also will serve as a source of data upon which to design future studies.

The report is divided into four parts: introductory and background material, analysis of data collected by CNER for this report, contributed articles by others doing work related to the new districts, and a summary including a critical discussion of the report, legislative concerns, and future research needs.

The introductory and background section begins with this overview. It is intended to present a rationale for the study, its limitations, and the procedures used. Next, an historical perspective gives readers a contextual setting in which to view the materials to come--how the year under study fits in with the larger picture of educational change in Alaska. The time-line presents an ordering of events since CNER's earlier study and subsequent publication. The chronology begins in January 1974, at the time

CNER's Unorganized Borough report was presented to the legislature and takes the reader through the passage of SB 35 and up to the official start of the new REAAs in June 1976. To complete the introductory section, key persons who have been involved in the local control movement over the last five years were invited to write their perspectives on progress since 1974 as a way of emphasizing the incredible amount of change that has occurred in such a short time. Accomplishments and successes, as well as emerging issues, are highlighted in the conclussion to the introductory section, and are re-emphasized throughout the report.

The second section of the report includes information directly collected for the study and analyzed by the CNER staff. This contains the information obtained from the survey questionnaires sent to REAA board members and superintendents. Unfortunately, practical limitations required the use of mail questionnaires, which is known to be an inefficient way to collect data. REAA Board Minutes and Minutes of the State Board of Education were used as substantiating or secondary data sources for reviewing attitudes and issues. The analysis of these minutes also is presented in this section. The questionnaire survey and analysis of the minutes allows broad rather than in-depth coverage to all REAAs. Therefore, to balance this data with more in-depth information, a case study was done in one REAA. Conversations with parents, teachers, school administrators and board members were used to focus on what was called "perceived quality of education" and how it may or may not have been affected by the creation of the REAAs and their first working year.

The next section, called contributed chapters, contains input provided by others in CNER and statewide who have been working on related issues.

This allowed the study to go into many more areas than its limited resources would have permitted and also gives visibility to those doing work in the state who would not normally have had a vehicle to disseminate their information. One contributed chapter deals with the creation of REAAs as it affects and is affected by municipal development in the Unorganized Borough because this was an area emphasized in the earlier CNER study. The chapter was written by a staff member of the Department of Community and Regional Affairs.

A student from the University of Alaska-Southeast has conducted her own survey of the community school committees and her analysis is presented. An in-depth study of one REAA's new secondary education program was done as a dissertation. The article presented, based upon that study, provides coverage of this very important issue. From within CNER, a brief survey of the finance issues concerning REAA schools is presented by the principal investigator of the school finance study. An adjunct CNER staff member discusses the REAAs as related to BIA schools and current issues in school transfer policies. Other contributed chapters discuss teachers in the current pressing bilingual controversy as a local control issue.

The final chapter, which is intended as both a summary and a forecast; is presented in two parts. The first part briefly describes other studies concerning the REAAs and related issues which have been identified in the state. It also serves to raise additional issues not included in this report.

The major part of this final chapter is based upon a unique approach. Those contributing to the report plus a few selected persons were invited

to a seminar at CNER at the time the draft materials of the report were ready. This group was asked to review the materials as a whole and to discuss their contributions and the information provided the Center. They also were asked to discuss their mutual findings as they relate to possible need for additional or revised legislation and to other issues in need of further study. The transcript of this seminar was edited, and selected remarks are included in the final section of the report.

The report also includes an appendix with selected news clippings on the REAAs in their first year.

Final Draft

Progress on the Transfer of BIA Schools Since the Passage of SB 35

November 1977

It was viewed by some that one of the most significant aspects of SB 35 was the inclusion of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools within the boundaries of the Regional Education Attendance Areas. This was interpreted to be the final chapter in the history of Alaska's dual (Federal/State) system, anticipating the subsequent transition of the BIA federally operated schools into the Alaska State school system.

This view was further supported by the 1975-76 Annual Report of the Alaska Commissioner of Education. Reference is made to the dual system as follows:

> ...Currently underway are plans to integrate the State's remaining Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools with those under State jurisdiction. Seven schools operated by the BIA transferred to the new districts this summer.
>
> 'What we hope to see is really simple,' said Commissioner of Education Marshall Lind, 'a single system for all the state's youngsters. And it will be a system structured by state law and regulations, and guided by locally elected school boards.'
>
> The transfer of the seven Bureau of Indian Affairs schools was the first shift of that type to take place in about eight years. BIA schools at Kotzebue, Hooper Bay, Emmonak, Upper Kalskag, Lower Kalskag, and Kiana became a part of the state system. 'And those decisions were made by the people themselves and not by bureaucrats at either the State or Federal level,' Lind said. 'This was the beginning. They got the momentum going, and I am confident that it will continue.'

While the optimism expressed by the Commissioner is significant and evidences an attitude of receptivity toward transfer by the State, acting on behalf of and in conjunction with the REAAs, the actual situation with regard to unification of the systems does not appear to be as promising as he expressed. A review of information from both the files of the Department of Education and the Bureau of Indian Affairs assembled for a Task Force on the Transfer of BIA schools in early 1977 reveals that there are marked differences in State and Federal attitudes toward final accomplishment of unification or merger of the systems.

The following selected chronological listing of correspondence, exchanges of proposals, and opinions, provides a synopsis of events from the signing of SB 25 to the status as of August 1977. The listing is not intended to be all-inclusive but rather to be illustrative of both progress and concerns.

This chapter is abridged from the National Institute of Education Report, The Organization, Management and Financing of Alaska Native Education, by Don M. Dafoe, in press.

March 1975. The Governor signed SB 35, the Act providing for the elimination of the Alaska State-Operated School System and the establishment of 21 Regional Education Attendance Areas.

June 15, 1975. The Governor signed into law as Chapter 150, SLA 1975, an Act which related to the transfer of federal agency schools and provided that teachers who wished to transfer would be placed on the salary schedule at no less than his/her current salary; that a transferring teacher holding a valid Alaska certificate and having taught two or more years in the Federal school would be placed on tenure; that sick leave accumulated while teaching in Alaska could be transferred; and that credit toward retirement would be allowed on the basis of up to ten years credit on a buy-in arrangement (the same as for any teacher entering from outside Alaska).

January 1976. Draft letter from Chairman, State Board of Education, to Area Director of the BIA for discussion purposes. The letter pointed out that with the creation of the REAAs qualified voters in villages served by BIA schools are eligible to vote for and serve on REAA boards, citing the example of Kotzebue, where the BIA operated the school, having five seats on the REAA board. The letter then formally requested the transfer of eight schools in locations where the State is operating secondary programs. The letter also noted that the State Board has directed the Department staff to work with the BIA in addressing the problem of transition of the remaining BIA schools to state control.

February 2, 1976. Deputy Area Director's memorandum reported a meeting with the State Board of Education on January 30. The report noted that the Area Director had expressed concern that the commitment to local villages under the self-determination policies and regulations has made school transfer decisions more difficult. He felt that the REAA boards should have a voice in the transfer decisions, and suggested only two schools be transferred at this time. He agreed that REAA boards and BIA employees should be informed on discussions, progress, and plans.

March 19, 1976. Memorandum from Area Director to Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He noted that discussions are being held concerning school transfers and that one of the problem areas is the question of upgrading school facilities to meet State standards and the availability of Federal dollars for such purpose.

March 26, 1976. Letters from Area Director to REAA boards. He noted control of BIA schools within an REAA border hinges upon the board's desire to assume the responsibility. He suggested that any proposals for assumption of BIA school operations first be discussed with the affected community.

March 26, 1976. Memoranda from the Area Director to BIA day schools. The Director noted that under the Indian Self-Determination Act it would be possible for the Bureau to contract with Native tribal entities for school operations, but to date no such contracts had been entered into. However, he noted that they would not contract with an REAA, although direct transfers would be possible.

April 7, 1976. Commissioner Lind transmits a proposed Memorandum of Agreement to the Area Director. Essentially the proposal expressed the State's willingness to assume operational authority, where the REAA board has expressed willingness to accept the schools, to assume title to property or a use permit, if the schools are up to State standards, with the BIA agreeing to provide funding of the entire difference between funds received by the State under P.L. 874 and the state funding formula for the particular site on a declining basis over a five-year period. It also requested BIA funding to the extent available to provide upgrading of facilities and new facilities.

April 13, 1976. Letter from Area Director to the Chairperson of the Northwest Arctic REAA acknowledging receipt of the request for Kiana and Kotzebue day schools to be transferred to the district. (This transfer was later effected.)

April 16, 1976. Area Director responded to State proposal, objecting to several points;particularly those related to continued financing for operations and financing of capital improvements. The letter also noted that the BIA felt that perhaps the State proposal put undue pressure on the REAAs to assume responsibility for schools operated by the Bureau and noted that the Bureau was planning to continue operations.

May 1 and May 8, 1976. The Lower Yukon REAA submitted resolutions regarding the transfer of four schools.

November 1976. Yupiktak Bista stated its position on school transfers, citing the Indian Self-Determination Act under which, in their opinion, Native peoples could determine whether they wanted to contract to operate schools and the conflict with apparent authority given to the REAAs to take over schools. They expressed opposition to further transfers,citing the financial instability of the REAAs and the failure of the State to provide sufficient funds; stating that villages should not be asked to vote on transfer until the REAAs had proven themselves as viable educational districts.

November 16, 1976. The Area Director sent letters to all REAA boards asking that any requests for transfers of schools be submitted no later than January 1, 1977, and asking that village concurrence be gained prior to taking board action.

November 22, 1976. The Lower Kuskokwim REAA board adopted a policy of assuming operation of BIA day schools in each village where a district-operated high school program is established. When this action became known the villagers of Toksook became aroused and objected to the policy.

December 1976. The Area Director proposed a Memorandum of Agreement which ignored, and in effect rejected, the State's proposal for continued funding on a declining basis and the question of upgrading or replacing facilities. It did recognize the possibility of supplementing a transferred school's budget to prevent serious loss of programs, on a case-by-case basis, and proposed to proceed with procurement of supplies for the school program, including

lunch service and utility contracts for one year. Subsequently, the proposal was amended to a "final offer" of two-year funding for teacher aides, two-year funding of food service, and initial start-up costs for the year of transfer.

January 20, 1977. The Area Director in a letter to the Governor officially terminated the existing agreement between the Bureau and the State in school transfers (the 1968 Overall Plan) on the grounds that it was outmoded and in conflict with the Self-Determination Act and inappropriate under the new REAA school district statute. He indicated willingness to reopen negotiations.

January 21, 1977. Governor Hammond's letter to Interior Secretary Andrus. He referred to the Area Director's action in denying any special assistance to REAAs for schools already transferred because of the State's rejection of the BIA's "final offer," noting the Director's apparent intent to reprogram funds reserved for these six schools to other BIA programs. Requested a hearing to present the State's position.

January 26, 1977. Area Director's letter to Commissioner Lind stating that because of the Indian Self-Determination Act the BIA policy would be to require village concurrence before the Bureau would agree to transfer a school and that he was notifying the REAAs accordingly. (On February 24 the Commissioner responded to the Area Director agreeing, to the concept of village concurrence.)

The Report of the Task Force on Alaska School Transfer

As a result of Governor Hammond's letter to Secretary Andrus a Task Force was appointed by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The Task Force Report[1] referred to past efforts toward school transfers, noting that the State is legally obligated to furnish education to all its children, but stating that the Bureau should continue operating schools until a local community wants it to withdraw. Reference is made to the 1968 plan, termed as presently outmoded, and cites the REAA act and the Indian Self-Determination Act as the framework within which transfers must be considered. It states:

> ...In all instances Native American communities will be advised of their options either to (1) transfer their schools to the Regional Education Attendance Area, (2) contract with the BIA, or (3) remain under the Federal school system.

A Field Solicitor's opinion included in the reports noted that the Bureau is not legally required to transfer any school or schools upon request of the state, and that schools previously transferred would not have to be accepted back by the Bureau.

Positions stated in the Task Force report related to schools included:

1. The Bureau would agree to complete any scheduled funded capital improvements, but schools would be transferred on an "as is, where is" basis.

2. ESEA Title I program support could no longer be gained through BIA but could be sought through the Alaska Department of Education.

3. Native students transferred from BIA schools to REAA schools would become eligible for Johnson O'Malley support.

The report concluded with a listing of alternatives and noted their probable impact. Basically the options were as follows:

Option I. Schools be transferred on request of local communities with no BIA financial participation other than start-up costs.

Option II. BIA negotiate directly with the REAAs which had gained village concurrence for transfer through resolutions. (The impact statement noted that this would mean negotiating with seven REAAs rather than with the State.)

Option III. BIA would transfer schools to the State with (a) two-year funding for teacher aides; (b) two-year funding for food service programs; and (c) start-up costs as noted under Option I.

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[1] "Report of the Task Force on the Transfer of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools to the State of Alaska" (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Commissioner, Bureau of Indian Affairs), March 25, 1977.

Option IV. In addition to Option III above, the BIA would reimburse the Department of Education for the amount of the State's payments in lieu of local revenue, computed at $575 for the 1977 school year.

Option V. The Bureau would accept the State position as stated in the Governor's letter of January 1977: fundamentally, that the Bureau provide financial assistance to the REAA districts for supplemental programs for two years; and that the BIA provide the State reimbursement for expenditures above and beyond normal State entitlement, less P.L. 874 funds, to be phased out for any transferred school over a five year period.

The Task Force Report also recommended that there be developed guidelines for school transfers in Alaska which could include methodology for assessing financial and program needs, guidelines for securing village concurrence, and means for measuring the impact on school operations subsequent to transfer.

Actions Following the Task Report

On May 5, 1977, Raymond Butler, Acting Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs, wrote to Governor Hammond stating that after consideration of the Task Force report the Bureau was proposing that the State and the Bureau move toward finalizing an agreement based on Option IV of the report "or some part of it."

On July 20, 1977, Governor Hammond responded to Mr. Butler, stating in the second paragraph:

> If my understanding is correct, the Option No. 4 of which you speak in your letter is in addition to the efforts of Senator Stevens to provide the difference between Public Law 874 payments and the foundation formula costs per pupil to the State of Alaska in a five-year phaseout program. Under this assumption, the state is pleased with your choice of options and I am sure we can proceed to finalize an agreement.

As yet there has been no official response from the Bureau to Governor Hammond's letter. The transfer program has "bogged down" again, however. Only one school may be transferred in 1977-78.

POLICY ISSUES

There appear to be several policy matters still to be resolved in connection with the transfer of schools and the future role of the Bureau in Alaskan education. The REAAs are so new that their operations are still not on firm ground and it is possible that there could be modifications to the present organizational pattern. For example, some communities might see fit to incorporate as first class cities and become city school districts, and some areas might organize as boroughs and become borough school districts. Two of these policy concerns are summarized below.

Policy Issue: Financing of Transferred Schools

> In view of the fact that there appears to be no legal question but that the State of Alaska has the responsibility to provide education for all its children and youth and has in the creation of the Regional Education Attendance Area districts (REAAs) included all areas now served by Federal schools without any exclusion clause, is the State justified in asking for reimbursement by the BIA on the basis of total State funding requirements on a five-year declining basis (100% the first year, 80% the second year, etc.) plus one-time transfer costs?

Financing school transfers has been the most evident problem for many years. The question of basic and supplemental program support, and the related question of financing the upgrading of present facilities and the provision of new facilities, has been dominant in discussions and proposals over the last thirty years and has far overshadowed any questions of curriculum, staffing, and program.

In asking full reimbursement for all the State cost of assumption of a transferred school by an REAA (Public School Foundation Act entitlement plus in-lieu of local tax payments) the first year and declining support for an additional four years, the State rationale appears to be based on the lack of a tax base for the support of rural schools and the point that total State support of schools in the REAAs raises the question of fiscal fairness with respect to support of schools in other districts. The phase-out of the special entitlement rate for federal funds under P.L. 874, now entering the third year, has increased the State's financial contribution. State officials also note that the State has already assumed a considerable amount of funding formerly provided by the BIA by providing full costs of the boarding home program and by the agreement under the Tobeluk case to provide secondary schools.

A very strongly related question of finance is the potential cost of upgrading transferred facilities to State standards, which is estimated to be as high as forty million dollars, and the projected need for construction dollars for elementary and secondary schools in the REAAs estimated at as high as three million dollars over the next five to ten years. (The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities is currently undertaking an appraisal of upgrading needs at 23 BIA school locations.)

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' position is that the Federal government has no legal obligation to finance schools which are transferred to the State--these schools, once they become part of the REAA operation, should be entitled to full support under State foundation entitlement and in-lieu payments as is any other school in the REAA. They note that the continuing operation of Federal schools in Alaska is not a legal obligation--it is not based on any reservation status or special treaties--but is instead only a "trust" responsibility.

Enabling legislation for the REAAs does not provide for them to hold title to real property--this is still in the hands of the State, which also assumes responsibility for the major maintenance and repair of existing school facilities and for new construction. Thus, the present policy of the Bureau to transfer title to schools, where such title is not affected by the Native Land Claims Settlement, on an "as is, where is" basis, relates directly to the State rather than to the REAA.

The question may well be asked if the time has come where the negotiations on transfer, particularly the financial questions involved, may not have to be undertaken directly at a higher level than the Department of Education and the Area Director's office. There is the related question of whether legislative assent by the Congress and the State should be sought. Some thought might well be given toward introduction of legislation at the Federal level which would constitute enabling legislation for culmination of the transfer effort, with authorization for appropriations to meet the transfers as well as perhaps resolving some of the uncertainties of the Indian Self-Determination Act as applied to Alaska. An appropriate resolution of the State Legislature accepting the agreed-upon terms would then be in order, or the State resolution could be in advance and seek Congressional concurrence and commitment.

Policy Issue: Application of the Indian Self-Determination Act to Native Education in Alaska

> Although the contracting for administration of Federally supported educational services, including the actual operation of village schools in Alaska, appears to be within the broad purview of the Indian Self-Determination Act, would such actions in Alaska be in the best interests of education for rural Alaska Natives?

It has been interpreted by Federal officials that the provisions of the Indian Self-Determination Act with regard to the contracting for services, including education, is within the scope and intent of the Act. The Act defines "Indian" tribes as "any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act." However, this language does not adequately cover the question of tribal identification in Alaska. The regional non-profit corporations created by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement encompass, in at least several instances, more than one "tribe" as defined or interpreted by the Native people themselves. The writer has been told that even in the

case of village corporations there may be more than one tribe involved insofar as the Natives themselves perceive the tribal situation. As one Native leader expressed to the writer, "They try to tell us what is a tribe but we know our own tribal arrangements--they don't." So, depending on definition, and who is doing the interpreting, there could be as few as twelve or more than 400 tribes in Alaska.

Senator Gravel has proposed legislation that would designate the twelve non-profit regional corporations in Alaska as "tribes" for the purposes of the Act. Generally speaking, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has already recognized this definition in the contracting of services other than education to some regional non-profit corporations. There have been indications from some villages that they would not want a contract for their school operation to be handled by a regional corporation. Perhaps there is some concern that contracting is a hidden form of the old expressed policy of termination of all Bureau services or that the local control which they desire would become regional control. Among concerns on the part of the Bureau officials, probably shared by some villages, is that when a service is contracted, the contracting agency, such as a regional non-profit corporation, uses a substantial amount of the funds available for administration and overhead, resulting in less funds being available for the programs.

There have been tentative moves made on a regional level toward seeking a contractual relationship for operating schools. It is clear that the Bureau office in Juneau is not encouraging any one option and, thus far, there is no record of any individual village seeking contracting authority. However, the potential of contracting for school services introduces complexity to the school transfer picture.

* *

In summary, although progress toward the transfer of BIA schools to the Alaska system has been slow, there is reason to hope that with the attention now being focused on the problem, solutions acceptable to the federal government, the state, and the villages choosing to transfer will be forthcoming.

FINAL DRAFT

Paul A. Goodwin
Nov. 11, 1977
Dick Mueller's REAA (?)

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF AN REAA: A CASE STUDY EMPHASIZING CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

The establishment of local control of education was mandated by the legislation known as Senate Bill 35 (SB 35). The purpose of this paper is to examine and report on the effect of the legislation as perceived by the members of a rural community.

Financial considerations limited the scope of the research effort to sample rural opinion for this report. Although the questionnaires, board minutes and other means were used to collect information from all REAA's, the preferred method would have been to gather first-hand knowledge by visiting each REAA and all its communities. Since this was not possible, we chose to use a case study approach to supplement the information obtained from these other sources as well as to see what different types of responses or information could be collected in this way. Expense and time associated with visiting the greatly separated communities limited the case study approach to only one REAA and within that one REAA, travel was limited to the central community. However, the number of people from outlying areas traveling to the central community allowed us to obtain opinions from roughly 50% of all the communities located within the chosen REAA. Nevertheless, as the differences of opinion surrounding a given issue varies from community to community, all differences may not be thoroughly dealt with in this report.

In selecting an REAA for the case study, five criteria were considered: (1) the administrative seat must be located in a central community which is part of the REAA; (2) the REAA must contain a multi-

cultural population; (3) the REAA must contain a BIA school; (4) the REAA chosen for the case study should not be one that has been dealt with elsewhere in the overall study; and (5) the REAA must be convenient for travel.

The person chosen to conduct this case study and write this report was chosen on the basis of his person background, expertise in education, and recent activity in Native affairs. Raised in Kotzebue, Paul A. Goodwin is of partial Native Alaskan descent. A portion of his primary education was obtained in a boarding-home context; the remainder in schools located on the Kenai Peninsula. He did not attend high school, but is, nevertheless, expected to officially receive his Ph.D. degree in geophysics from the University of Alaska in May of 1978. Paul Goodwin has taught extensively at the University of Alaska, concentrating his attention on cross-cultural science courses. He is also a past President of the Fairbanks Native Association, Inc.

Concerning the results and how they were arrived at, the author spent five days in the REAA central community and talked with parents, teachers, administrators, and in some cases, bystanders, in the effort to assess the rural point of view concerning the issue of local control of education. Each individual rather than being "interviewed", was allowed to "free-associate", after introductory comments were given by the author. These introductory comments concerned the intent of this report. In an attempt to focus the conversations, three general questions were prepared: "Why did you and/or other members of the community think it necessary to have local control of education?"; "Did the legislation that set up the REAA adequately address your, or the community's, original concerns regarding education?"; and "How

has the establishment of local control of education affected the quality of education in your community or REAA?" Usually questions were asked as the responses to the above questions developed.

In virtually every case, the responses were offered freely and in the spirit of interest and concern. In many cases, a given respondent would relate his/her concerns regarding local control of education for well over an hour; in some cases for well over two hours. In all cases, the author attempted to maintain the integrity of the rural opinion concerning a given topic but interpretation of the responses have been added to unify the report. In that regard, this chapter is not so much concerned with exactly what was said, but with the meaning of what was said. What follows, then, is hopefully not just a codification of responses given, but a discussion of the core outstanding issues, as determined by the rather obvious common interest among the respondents. The paper is arranged so as to place the topic receiving the most response first. Thus, as one reads this report, topics will appear in the same order and, hopefully, with roughly the same emphasis, as was given them by the members of the rural community.

THE QUESTION AS TO WHY LOCAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION WAS DESIRED

The first question asked ("Why did you and/or other members of the community think it necessary to have local control of education?") received responses that strongly suggested a unanimous feeling in the community concerning the entire issue of local control--whether it be local control of education or local control of anything else. Everyone who was asked the question generally agreed that local control is the right way to handle education. Most people were not particularly in

agreement concerning why this should be the case. Hence, while soliciting opinions, one would hear that local control was originally considered necessary for a variety of reasons. Some would maintain that local control was primarily necessary to assure the timely maintenance of school facilities. Others would maintain that local control would provide for community input concerning the selection of teachers and administrators. Yet others felt that local control would simply make the school system, and particularly the administrators, "more responsive" to the community need and interest.

In spite of this diversity of opinion, one is able to discern a central theme linking all of the reasons given for the necessity for local control of education to a more general rural community concern: That concern being the reduction of the influence of what are perceived as culturally and socially irrelevant bureaucracies in favor of systems that are neither bureaucratic, nor culturally or socially irrelevant. Thus, one sees the rural community developing, for instance, a strong advocacy position with regard to local control of education, while at the same time seeing a partial abandonment of the Western concept of law.

To give examples, and to further clarify this point, the author suggests that education as well as law, in the Western context, must be highly bureaucratic and almost completely arbitrary. To overlay such systems onto a culturally different, rural community often results in situations that are, in a somewhat Alice-in-Wonderland sense, ludicrous.

For instance, the arbitrariness of Western law would have children selling lemonade on their front walk charge sales tax to their customers (some states have actually filed suit in such cases). In a Western urban community, assessing the full range of legal measures against such children

may be necessary to establish the "fairness" of the law. In the rural community, however, such arbitrariness is not well understood, and given the event-oriented character of the Native Alaskan cultures, it is certainly not understood in terms of fairness. Where the letter of the law is upheld in the rural community, racial, cultural or social animosities often develop. These animosities tend to leave the Alaskan society, as a whole, judicially in far worse shape than they would have been in had the society not built such culturally and socially irrelevant arbitrariness into the law in the first place (consider the problems that Alaska has always had with the "Bush Justice System").

In the case of education, cultural and social relevance is also an issue of considerable importance. It is an issue, however, that has had much attention drawn away from it, in the past, by the very nature of the bureaucracy that existed at the time: i.e., the bureaucracy associated with the State Operated Schools (SOS). Thus, as the community responded to the question of this section, the story about how the SOS administrators and teachers would pay little attention to education in lieu of "sitting at their desk filling out papers for Anchorage" (Anchorage is where the SOS administrative seat was located) was often heard. As with the necessity for the arbitrariness of law, the rural community does not well understand the necessity for an administrator or teacher spending large amounts of time "filling out papers for Anchorage."

Given this interpretation, one arrives at a culturally relevant perspective concerning the motivation that originally gave rise to the movement toward local control. That is to say, while people offer specific reasons, which presumably identify the motivation for local

control (e.g., "better maintenance of facilities"), what is probably closer to the case is that members of the rural community wish local control more for cultural reasons than for the rather pat, more mundane reasons that are almost always given in the standard interview situation. What these so-called cultural reasons are is beyond the scope of this brief report, but they seem similar to the motivating forces that prevailed during the development of the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act of 1971 and, more recently, during the development of the Indian Self-Determination legislation as related to Alaska.

It would be incorrect, however, to assume that the impetus for local control of education is entirely an extension on the motivation behind local control in general. In point of fact, within the rural community there is a substantial regard for the quality of education. Although this regard for educational quality is left somewhat unarticulated, it is fairly easy to see that the concern for quality has been an important motivating factor in obtaining local control of education. Consider, for example, that many respondents felt that local control was necessary so as to provide for community input in the selection of teachers and administrators. Further questioning of the respondents concerning this point indicated that many of these people felt that if the community could control the hiring of, for instance, teachers, "education would get better." This point will be amplified further in another section. For now, suffice it to say that judging from this particular case, the concern for educational quality seemed to provide substantial impetus for the rural community to become involved in the issues surrounding local control of education.

BOARD TRAINING

The second question ("Did the legislation that set up the REAA adequately address your, or the community's, original concerns regarding education?") is somewhat more complicated than the first, in that it concerned problems that are currently a part of the community. For this reason there was no lack of opinion.

On the average, the rural community responded in the affirmative to the question. That is, most agreed that the REAA concept, and attendant legislation, did indeed address the original concerns regarding education. Whether the legislation adequately addressed the original concerns of the community regarding education is a questionable point. What follows, then, is the present author's attempt to duplicate the feeling of the respondents by attempting to duplicate the opinions surrounding the individual issues that made up given answers to the question.

While it was generally agreed that the establishment of the REAA did address many local problems associated with education, it was also generally agreed that the operation of the REAA resulted in the development of many more problems. The most outstanding of these problems is the concern regarding the overall competence of the newly formed Regional School Boards and Community School Committees.

Most of those who brought up the issue of board training stated that the majority of the members of the various boards simply did not know what it was that a board was supposed to do. Many respondents (including board members) supported their opinion by pointing out that some Regional Board members and many Community School Committee (CSC)

members were not literate; many respondents were of the opinion that the average school board member[1] had a very poor education. Consequently, they felt these board members could not be expected to deal effectively with the sorts of problems with which they were asked to deal. It is interesting to note that comments such as these were made by Natives and Caucasians, as well as by the educated and non-educated people of the community.

Given other evidence as well, it is assumed that the statements concerning the literacy and educational background of many of the school board members were essentially correct. One then naturally wonders why members judged unqualified were elected to the board.One also wonders how the function of a school board, made up of such members, is affected. The former query is dealt with in a later section. Concerning the latter query, it was found that from the point of view of many of the rural community, such a school board does not work very well at all.

For example, among the more common critical comments were: "... it is difficult to get a quorum because board members use the occasion of a school board meeting to party"; "Most board members just sit there and don't say anything while a few aggressive types dominate the whole meeting"; and "The board spends too much time on personnel matters, maintenance and other details while ignoring the important issues."

In most cases, it was difficult to find out exactly what they meant by something they said. For instance, what does a person mean

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[1] It was often difficult to tell whether people were referring to the REAA Board or the Community School Committee or both. For this discussion, "Board" will be used in the singular, as the REAA Board, even though comments may apply to community boards as well.

when they say something like "... members use the occasion of a school board meeting to party"? In particular, what do they mean by "party"? What sort of behavior have they witnessed? Furthermore, in what ways do the "aggressive types" dominate the board?

Given the rather vague answers to the above questions, one is led to believe that perhaps rather than some first-hand experience concerning board competence, most were responding on the basis of peer pressures, or some other such process. Except for isolated events, most respondents could not affirm the behavior of any board member on the basis of first-hand knowledge. However, it was all too often assumed that if a given board member did not attend a meeting, that individual was "partying." It is not the purpose of this report to make a case for or against the contention that some board members party so much that quorums cannot be achieved. The fact is, rural school boards regularly hold meetings that are attended by a quorum. What should be understood about this particular community is that the matter of partying seems to have led to a general feeling that some of the board members are not competent. Even if the board were working perfectly, such assumptions by the community would tend to reduce its effectiveness.

To a lesser degree, the same is true of the community observation that a few aggressive individuals dominate the board. While it may be true that if one attended a given rural school board meeting, it would seem that a few dominate, the facts may be quite different. As one respondent realized and commented upon, the board method of governing (and, indeed formal education itself) is imposed onto a culture that, if left alone, would do it otherwise. The board, being comprised of culturally different people, thus arrives at many curious operational compromises

that allow it to function. One such compromise is the case where various board members meet informally, in some cases many times, to discuss issues before the formal meeting. When the formal meeting begins, it is not uncommon, especially for the Native people, to vote rapidly and unanimously on a given issue. Upon seeing such a process, many outsiders would tend to believe that at least some of the Native element of the board was easily influenced, if not downright disinterested. But as we have seen, this could very possibly be a judgment that while basically sound in a Western cultural sense, may be otherwise completely incorrect. Similar care must be taken in the judgment of other characteristics of rural school board operations.

For example, if one read the REAA Board minutes, one could be led to the conclusion that the board and administrative functions are interchanged. As one of the more common critical comments concerning the board under study has indicated, the board is said to be far too involved in matters that are usually considered administrative, while being far too little involved in educational policy and programs. This suggests that the administration handles educational policy and programs. Administrators are usually hired from outside the REAA and if they are in primary control of policy and programs, then the rural community would seem to have gained only a new administrative role in acquiring local control of education. On the face of it, the board has not exercised its authority to establish policy or programs that would affect educational quality. In any case, the reversal of board and administrative roles seems to suggest that the board does indeed need training. Many of the administrators that were questioned agreed with the implications attendant to the reversal of board and administrative roles in the rural community.

However, the rural school board members had a different opinion of all this.

From the point of view of a Native member, involvement in personnell matters, for instance, is unquestionably an appropriate role of a local school board. The reason for this was established by comparing the older SOS and BIA school systems with the present system. The author was told that whereas the SOS and BIA systems often solicited local input regarding the hiring of a new teacher (many local advisory school boards to SOS and BIA had been set up in Alaska), it was never the case that that new teacher had any sort of real committment to an employer-employee relationship with the community. According to many Native respondents, these teachers owed allegiance to "Anchorage or Juneau" (i.e. the administration). Thus, it was said, those teachers could do more or less "anything they wanted to do" even if doing it was against the wishes of the community. In contrast, the present system allows the board to respond to local concern and, if warranted, fire a teacher. It was held that this new board power rendered the current group of teachers a good deal more responsive than the teachers of the past. Moreover, it was quite emphatically stated that this new responsiveness of the teachers would result in a higher quality of education for the children.

Further concerning the quality of education, one CSC Chairman responded that his group had become quite involved in the subject. When asked what sort of involvement this was, he explained that the CSC had recently begun changing the role of the local school principal. Back in the SOS days, and for a part of the REAA period of operation, the principal functioned largely as an "administrator of school business."

He meant that the principal was primarily concerned with reporting requirements, record keeping, letter writing, etc. (filling out papers for Anchorage). In changing the role of the principal, the CSC had in mind that the principal should be an "administrator of teachers" instead of an "administrator of business." That way, he said, the principal could teach as well as keep abreast of the quality of teaching in his school.

Continuing, the Chairman told of the CSC becoming involved in "minimum requirements testing." It seems that the CSC was toying with the idea of requiring all the graduates of the sixth and twelfth grades to take tests that would assess their actual academic capabilities. In this way, the school would be assured that the graduates of today "would not be like the ones who used to graduate around here." To add emphasis, the Chairman interjected that "all they ever used to do in school back in the old days was play basketball!"

Without belaboring the point, we should be able to see that while the boards may need training in the procedural or functional aspects of their role in education, little or no training is needed in the philosophical aspects. That is to say, the boards, clearly, have already assumed their appropriate role: that of being concerned about the quality and content of their children's education. However, this does not appear to be well understood by many of those in either the administration or the community. What often happens, then, is that many develop inappropriate feelings concerning the board's competence. However, as may be inferred, the major problem is not the board's competence, necessarily, but the different ways that the board looks at things. Because a particular board has one way of looking at something, and another board or admin-

istration has a different way of looking at the same thing, misunderstandings can occur.

The sort of training that might be offered a rural school board, then, should stress the relationships that should exist between boards, and between boards and administrations, if the system is to function effectively. Cross-cultural training, of an applied, non-theoretical nature, might be offered to the administrations as well as to the boards so as to develop the awareness needed for viable communication.

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE BOARDS AND BETWEEN THE BOARDS AND ADMINISTRATION

The relationships that exist between the Regional School Board and the Community School Committee (CSC) varies from one REAA to another (see report by S. Horton). Further, within an REAA, the relationship between one CSC and the Regional Board can be quite different from the corresponding relationship of another CSC. That this can occur is related to the fact that no firm guidelines exist that would define the relationships. Hence, within a given REAA, one CSC may dominate the educational affairs of the Regional Board and/or administration, while another will simply take what is given them.

When this topic came up, further questioning revealed that the lack of definition of the relationship between the Regional Board and the CSC was thought to be a weakness of the REAA system. When the suggestion was made that the State step in to establish firm guidelines, most respondents replied with an unequivocal no. They felt that the relationship could better be established by some scheme involving

board training.

Concerning the various boards and administration, another weak point was considered to be the lack of definition in the relationships between them. For example, was the local school principal answerable to the Regional Board or to the CSC or to the Superintendent? With regard to this particular relational problem, some within administration hinted that the State should develop guidelines. However, respondents in general again felt that this sort of problem could be dealt with most effectively by board training

Unfortunately, this perceived importance of board training is, many times, derived from considerations that are ill-defined. Consequently, no unanimous opinion can be obtained concerning the sort of board training the rural community feels that it needs. Some suggest that the board be given a "three R's" orientation concerning how a board works. Others suggest that this would be fine, but what is really needed is "more competent" people on the board, then training.

THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN THE CROSS-CULTURAL SETTING

To answer the question of how and why so-called incompetent board members were elected, one must examine the Western political process in its cross-culturally transplanted form.

Within the Western culture, it is a tacit assumption that the political process will select, from among many, the person best suited to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of a given office. To no small degree, this selection is accomplished by pitting one candidate for a given office against another. The candidate who is best able to express

himself, and who is then best able to manipulate the mass-media, is the candidate who is perceived by the populace to be the one most suited to fill the office. While this does not always work in a Western community, it works often enough that a popular faith in the system becomes established.

In the case of the REAA legislation, we have not only the legislation itself, but the political process, imposed on a culturally different environment. This suggests operational problems. In the case of the legislation, an operational mode can be established largely by definition. In other words, an REAA will operate according to fairly well defined rules and regulations. In the case of the election process, however, definitional considerations can only modestly affect the procedure; not the process. That is to say, while the State can impose a conformity on a rural election procedure (i.e., filing petitions, election judges, etc.), the State cannot impose conformity on the process.

Thus, in the rural community, one often sees unique variations on the theme of Western democracy, and in particular, on the theme of the election process. For instance, in the more traditional areas, a full slate of candidates may run for a given office, but it is often a foregone conclusion who will finally be elected. Members of important families, or those who are otherwise well known, are usually elected over those who may be technically better qualified to fulfill the responsibilities of the given office. For this reason, the election campaign is virtually non-existent in the more traditional areas of rural Alaska. It seems that the Western election process has been supplanted in the rural Alaskan community by the more culturally relevant oral tradition.

But what is the outcome of a culturally modified political process?

Will the new process result in a better or worse social condition for rural Alaska? In those cases where the new political process is found to better conditions, what can the State do to enhance the process?

In the opinion of the present author, if the first two questions were specifically asked of a given traditional community, the answer would be one that stressed self-determination. In other words the traditional community would not be so much concerned with the outcome of their particular brand of political process, as they would be with the thought that they could do it themselves. This is not to say that the traditional communities would not welcome a few State-initiated changes. In fact, in response to questions similar to the third kind, rural communities suggested such changes.

In particular, the changes suggested in the REAA under study were: (1) The State Election Office should devise means that would allow them to be better able to administer elections in a more timely fashion; and (2) The State Election Office should devise filing procedures, etc., that are more relevant to community understanding and circumstance.

These suggestions were given in view of the most recent school board elections. In some REAA's of Alaska, the elections were characterized as untimely and confusing (Interior Alaskan newspaper stories related to this issue are included). Concerning (1), many people stated that they did not know of the election until it was too late. With regard to (2), a few individuals thought the current filing procedure for school board seats to be essentially discriminatory. They apparently based their thinking on the feeling that most traditional candidates would not understand the necessity for obtaining a petition to run for a school board seat. Moreover, most of the would-be trad-

itional candidates would not be able to read or write and they would also not be familiar with the methods for completing a petition. It was said that when faced with the unfamiliarity associated with running for office, most traditionally oriented people would rather just forget the whole thing. In view of these considerations, one person suggested that a declared interest should be sufficient justification for placing a person's name on the ballot. Given the cultural context of local elections, this suggestion is not without merit.

THE RESURFACING OF THE ISSUE OF LOCAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION WITHIN THE REAA

Although this topic is not of overwhelming concern within the one REAA examined, mentioned of it occurred frequently enough to warrant its inclusion within this report. Moreover, the inclusion of the topic will add a different dimension to the previous discussion concerning the motivation for local control of education.

By way of preface, consider the previous section which examined the original motivation for local control. There, it was suggested the motivation for local control of education gained at least a portion of its momentum from the broader issue of self-determination. A case was made that further suggested that the self-determination issue was itself culturally motivated. Many of the opinions expressed by the members of the rural community tended to confirm these suggestions.

With SB 35, the rural communities have far less to worry about, insofar as they are concerned with an outside influence on local education. Nevertheless, in doing the field work for this report, it was more than

occasionally heard that the "administrative center of the REAA" was somehow deficient in its ability to administer local education. This is reminiscent of what all the rural communities were saying about Anchorage only a few years ago. Now, it seems the given REAA administrative center has assumed the role once exclusively held by the larger urban centers.

For example, comments received from residents of one village located toward the perimeter of the REAA examined, indicated that the REAA center was guilty of the same "unresponsiveness" now as was Anchorage in the old days. Of particular concern was the hot lunch program. According to the people questioned, their village had requested over and over again the equipment necessary to bring their school kitchen up to standard. As the weeks and months passed by, no equipment came. As a result, the village was forced to discontinue their hot lunch program.

Questioning these people further, it was found that while they considered building maintenance to be better now, it was not that much better than when SOS was doing it. The problems associated with maintenance centered around the length of time it took to get anything done. When asked why they thought it took so long to get things repaired, one individual stated that the administrative center "was too far away and the transportation was bad." But another interjected: "And those people up there are a different kind of people from us. We should be in the other region," implying that the "people up there" lacked an understanding of the needs of the community in question.

Continuing on the cultural theme, an older Native woman stated that she would not allow her children to attend high school "up there." One reason given for this attitude was that the people of the core city

spoke a different dialect of the Native language. Another person affirmed her statements and added that the local high school students attended school in a different REAA than the one in which the village was located. When asked why, family reasons were mentioned (another factor that should be considered is that the State pays for foster homes for boarding students. Consequently, if a student has family, or extended family, in an area with a high school, it is financially advantageous for both families involved to send the student there. However, the author does not feel that this is the primary motivation).

This curious way of looking at the REAA core surfaced again when the members of another village were questioned. In this case, however, the village was faced with the question of whether to keep their school BIA-operated or go with the REAA. In questioning a one-time CSC board member, it was found that the major concern of the village was how well the REAA could do as compared to the BIA. Apparently the BIA was making the local school a "model" and, as a result, was very responsive to the community. Since the village did not know if the REAA could do as well, they decided to adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude. When asked what sorts of things the REAA would have to do before they would join, all agreed that the REAA would have to demonstrate their ability in maintenance and responsiveness.

Cultural considerations entered into the conversation, but not in the explicit terms heard elsewhere. Nevertheless, the author felt that the cultural issue played some role in the village's decision to wait-and-see as subjects of a cultural nature were mentioned frequently.

All this raises the question as to what might be done to alleviate

these various problems. Unfortunately, it is not so easy as adjusting a few REAA boundaries. In the REAA studied for this report, one can identify two major language groups in addition to English. Also, some villages are largely traditional while some are either multi-cultural or largely Western. To adjust, therefore, REAA boundaries to account for all cultural variations possible, is out of the question. This leaves dealing with the problems themselves. In the opinion of the present author, this is the appropriate course of action. In the case of villages complaining of poor maintenance, better and faster communications between the administrative center and the local CSC would be of help. At least this way the village would be more aware of what problems there were in getting, for instance, their kitchen equipment. In the case of the village that adopted the wait-and-see position, such improved communication may represent an increased responsiveness on the part of the REAA center.

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

As might be expected, each person who responded to the inquiries that led to this report made their own unique contribution. Some, because they currently worked in or had worked in a Federal program, gave opinions and examples that reflected their experience within those programs. Others who had worked in a Native organization were able to offer valuable opinions concerning the role of these organizations in education.

Because each person's background was different, the supplementary comments were varied. They cannot all be included. However, a number

of these comments fit into three different categories. These categories are: (i) the Native corporations; (ii) the Federal programs (including the bilingual program);and (iii) the boarding home program. The remainder of this section will deal with each of these three categories one at a time.

The Native Corporations, whether profit or nonprofit, have become an integral part of the Native experience. It is not surprising, therefore, that Native corporations would somehow figure into education. What did come as a surprise in this case study was the way and the degree to which their influence was noted.

By way of explanation, the Native corporations have been formed, in one respect, to enhance the concept of local control. On the one hand, the profit corporations have been given money and land and the responsibility to manage those resources for profit. The profits made then work their way back to the Native share-holders of the corporation. On the other hand, the nonprofit corporation secures contracts and grants from various agencies to operate programs in the area where they are located. For instance, the Native programs operated by the BIA are more and more being taken over by the nonprofit corporations.

At the present time, the existence of the nonprofit corporations are of greater practical value to a rural community than the existence of the profit corporation. The reason for this is that nonprofits are locally based. They employ people in the community and provide for much practical training. In addition, the nonprofit corporations establish a feeling of self-determination for the Native population of a community. One way these corporations do this is to administer education

programs. As an example, the nonprofit corporation of a given region or community will often run the Federally funded Johnson O'Malley and Indian Education programs as well as the State funded Basic Education Program. In this way, the Native corporations quite substantially figure into education. But there is more to this.

When doing the case study, many Native people were approached. As they offered their opinions, the author often picked up a reference to one of the corporations. Sometimes it would be a reference to one of their family working for one; sometimes they would refer to their own employment experience. As the topic was followed up on, it was learned that these people have great expectations for their profit and nonprofit enterprises. They have corresponding expectations for the children who will one day work in and manage those enterprises.

Many times it was said that the children need good educations so that they could work in the corporations. It is interesting to note that while talking about the corporations, many referred to the need for a "three R's" education.

A reaction to the poor education of the past was many times one of adopting a hard attitude about the present educational efforts of the REAA. One young woman went so far as to condemn much of the existing school curriculum and many of the Federal programs as well. Condemning Federal programs was reasonably common, as people thought that there should be less emphasis on cultural enrichment and more emphasis on "education."

In all, it seemed that the employment market represented by the corporations acted as a strong stimulus for a good education. The Older Native person seemed to have felt this more than did the young. Pre-

sumably, the corporations represented a chance for their children and they did not want that chance lost because of a poor education.

The Federal Programs, as was mentioned in the last subsection, came under fire from the Native community. These programs were criticized relatively more by Natives who had not worked for the corporations than by other Native people who had, or by Caucasians. On the one hand, Federal programs represent support for many activities that employ Natives. Consequently, some Natives view these programs more in terms of the money they represent than in terms of their programmatic benefit. Most Caucasians of the community are usually involved in one program activity or another (at least the ones involved in this case study were). Many are educated and thus tend to view a program in terms of its more abstract benefits. The Native, who often had less formal education, tends to look at a program on the basis of its more obvious or practical benefit to the child. Thus, when no such benefits are seen, these people tend to be rather critical.

When talking to this latter group of people, the most commonly heard complaint was that the Federal programs concentrated too much on cultural matters. Particular criticisms centered around the bilingual education being offered in the schools and on the Johnson O'Malley (JOM) courses.

While criticism of the bilingual program was rather vague, and not too frequent, the author felt that those who did not like it would rather see it replaced by a more traditional Western curriculum. On a few occasions, comments like "the children are going to need English when

they grow up; not the Native language!" were heard. The JOM courses received much more criticism. The problem here is that often teachers from the lower forty-eight states would teach cultural courses to children who were a part of the local culture and who were thus familiar with it. As an example, one course was said to teach the youngsters how to snare rabbits while another taught camping; skills the children already possessed.

These criticisms suggest that the Federal programs should be modified as the educational needs of the REAA are identified. In this way, the Federal programs can become important alternatives for augmenting formal education.

The Boarding-Home Program in the next few years will be a thing of the past. Enough research has been done on this subject to indicate that the demise of the Boarding-Home Program is a much desired event. According to the relatively few comments given on this subject, the community strongly agrees. However, in talking with one familiar with the subject, the demise of the program will present many of the smaller villages with unexpected problems.

To paraphrase the problem: For many years the children of high school age have been sent to a boarding home program to complete their education. As the years went by, the villages got used to not having teenaged children about during the confining winter months. In the summer, the children would come home but the many activities would keep them busy. When the REAA's were established, new, small high schools were also established. Many of the students who would normally go away

to school stayed home. Some villages thus had a group of energetic teenagers with which to contend; a situation that many had not faced before. The lack of activity in the winter months caused these young people to become rather difficult. As a result, the villages were having trouble coping with their own children (the children were also having trouble coping with the new situation). Accordingly, some parents inquired as to the possibility of sending their children back to a boarding-home program.

Without additional comment, this problem was handled by not shutting down the local boarding home program immediately. In this way, those students who were used to attending high school away from home could continue to do so, if they wished, until they graduated. The choice was up to the student and the parents.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

When one considers the enormous problems associated with transferring all educational responsibility from the State to the local level, it is a wonder that the REAA's are working as well as they are. This is not to say that there are no problems. Clearly, there are. But the problems are small compared to the magnitude of the task.

Consider that in the REAA examined for this case study, local communities were expected to : establish educational policy and programs; assume an administrative posture; and develop ways and means to establish local high schools. And, if that were not enough, all these new tasks were expected to result in a higher quality of education.

Yet, when the author visited the rural community to do this case study,

scarcely any reference was made of the enormity of the above-mentioned tasks. People did not view the transference of educational responsibility from the State to themselves as being a problem worthy of any particular concern. Rather, people simply accepted the responsibility and got on with business. Instead of hearing about how difficult the job was, what was heard was praise or criticism concerning some particular aspect of the job and how it was all going. If it was not an opinion on board training, or the quality of education, or the political process, then it was perhaps an opinion on some cultural feature associated with the issues.

In spite of the specific problems, virtually everyone questioned felt that the REAA was evolving in an appropriate direction. Some felt that it was evolving at an acceptable rate; others did not. The point is that everyone approached was optimistic and aware of education, and had at least a few comments to make about it. One seldom encounters such optimism or awareness in an urban area.

On that basis, the rural community seems to be too critical of itself. However, this is a healthy environment for change. In the opinion of the present author, the dissent and criticism along with the optimism and awareness cannot help but result in an educational system far better for the children than it has been in the past.

REAAs in the News:

Year One

(July 76 - July 77)

All-Alaska Weekly, September 10, 1976

RURAL ALASKA GETS LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLS

From SOS to REAA

Transition Largest Such Undertaking in U.S. History

21 School Districts Get 100 Schools; 15 Are New High Schools

By Jo Anne Wold

This week in the 21 newly created school districts across the state of Alaska from Angoon to Kotzebue, and from Adak to Bethel, school doors opened for the first time under local authority, classes began under local superintendents, with locally hired teachers, and under the direction of a locally elected school board.

The great decentralization, as well as the dismantling of the State Operated Schools (SOS), has occurred, and the era of Regional Education Attendance Areas (REAA) is underway.

No longer will village schools be dictated to by a state board and state superintendents. Area school boards will now make their own decisions on curriculum, development, teacher recruiting and the use of educational funds.

This transition from an appointed state board to locally elected school boards was the largest such undertaking in the history of the United States, according to officials of the State Board of Education in Juneau.

Dr. Marshall Lind, commissioner of education, said he would work very closely with the new boards. "We will provide whatever assistance we can," he said. "But we do not want to get in their way."

The Alaska constitution provides that every village with eight elementary age children must have a school, and that rural areas meeting the pupil requirement have the option of setting up their own secondary school.

This fall 15 villages will have a high school for the first time. Some high schools, such as Angoon where 55 students are enrolled, will have a full secondary school, while other villages, such as Greyling, will have one high school teacher offering supervised study or correspondence courses.

(continued)

REAA . . .

All-Alaska Weekly, September 10, 1976

In 1975 the landmark legislation passing control to local boards was approved by the state legislature. This year money was allocated to finance the new districts.

One hundred per cent of the new districts' education costs is paid by the state. In the North Star Borough School District, for example, 95 per cent of the basic education costs is funded by the state through the Public School Foundation (PSF). This year the PSF budget is $132.3 million.

In addition to receiving funds from PSF, the newly created REAA's have $40 million in funding from the state, as well as $100,000 for school board elections in rural areas.

During this period of transition and takeover of more than 100 SOS schools, there are more questions than answers, and, in some cases, more problems than solutions.

For example, the state department of education will not know until possibly late October how many new teachers have been hired by the new districts and how many students are being taught by the REAA's.

Teacher hiring in some areas was a hectic and chaotic situation. As the deadline day of school opening approached, some schools were still without enough teachers. Teacher job interviews, it was reported, were less than thorough.

Word of job openings passed via the grapevine with some teachers rushing to highway communities or flying (at their own expense) to villages for interviews. Some teachers, who filed applications in early spring, were hired one week before school started.

Teachers going to remote locations had to pack personal belongings, household goods and enough food to carry them through the nine month school year. Many of them, caught short of cash, had to borrow money to buy a large food supply and pay the freight costs.

The real rub came with housing for the increased school personnel. In most places teachers were told, "housing is tight. You will have to make your own arrangements." This resulted in some teachers sharing the same living quarters. Because of the

REAA . . .

—Continued from page 1

housing shortage, teacher couples were preferred.

One couple on a tour in Fairbanks heard of a teaching position in a nearby community. The man applied for it, received it, and they flew home to quit their jobs and sell their home in order to teach in Alaska. (The retirement pay here, four times greater than in their midwestern state, was the deciding factor, they said.)

Another problem is school buildings, especially for those communities where there has not been an elementary or secondary school.

The success of REAA hinges on the $59 million school bond proposal that will be on the ballot this November.

In addition to SOS schools, a number of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools (BIA) have been taken over by REAA. The largest one is the 700-student school in Kotzebue.

"We are vitally interested in this transition being a successful one," said Deputy Commissioner Nate Cole. "We are totally committed to local control of education. We put a lot of our department's resources into this decentralization."

When Cole was asked if he though REAA was a more expensive program than SOS, he said, "In my personal opinion, I do not believe it is.

"I base that on having done some analysis on SOS costs from its inception until its termination this year."

Meanwhile, at the Center for Northern Research (CNER) at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, a study has been underway for the past year on the Public School Foundation program.

"One reason for the study will be to determine whether REAA is more or less expensive than SOS. Right now no one knows," said E. Dean Coon, assistant director of the center.

The study, due for completion next year, will also determine an equitable method of collecting and distributing state funds for schools. They will look at the validity of regional differences and make recommendations. Right now, for example, the Barrow school district gets 133 per cent more per student than the state spends per student in Anchorage.

On the subject of REAA funding no one is sure whether the money for REAAs is "too little, just right, or too much," Coon said.

This fall CNER will sponsor four regional workshops in Fairbanks to introduce reports and gather public opinion on public school funding.

Voters To Determine Bush Schools

By Sam Kito

THE RECENT OUT of court settlement by the State of Alaska resulted in a commitment by the state to enable elementary and secondary school age children in every bush village to continue their education at home.

This settlement is designed to stop the disruption of family life that existed in the past by forcing children to leave their village home to attend school. Sometimes children had to travel to Oklahoma, Oregon, Mt. Edgecumbe and Wrangell Institute.

Those students traveling to Wrangell Institute ranged from grade one through grade eight. Imagine for a minute, a parent with a six - year - old standing at the airport waiting to send his child to school for nine months to be raised without intimate parental guidance.

IT IS unfortunate that this litigation had to proceed to conclusion prior to a settlement being reached. The settlement is contingent upon the passage of the $39 million rural bond issue to face the voters in November. Of that amount, $20 million will initially be set aside to settle the Molly Hootch lawsuit.

Now that a settlement has been reached, passage of the Rural Construction Bond issue is essential to provide quality and responsive education in rural Alaska.

If the bond issue fails, Alaska Legal Services has reserved the right to continue the suit.

Even though the Supreme Court ruled that the state did not have a constitutional obligation to provide education in each community, it did reserve the right to review the progress of establishing schools to provide education in rural Alaska in the future.

THE NEGOTIATED settlement is a step in the right direction. The governor should be commended for recognizing that the Boarding Home Program and dormitories were expensive alternatives to providing local education.

The settlement could not have been completed by the governor and legal services if the legislature did not pass the rural bond issue. The legislative leadership recognized that a bond package had to be approved in order for negotiations to culminate in a settlement. The action of the leadership will be greatly appreciated by parents and children who will be able to attend school in their own community.

There has been a continued effort to move education closer to isolated communities, as the parents' voices become more vociferous and the Body Politic listened. Listening were elected politicians, educators, and native leaders.

Observe the move to regional high schools in 1965, the development of the successful area high school concept implemented early in this decade and the Boarding - Home Program. The regional high school concept built dormitories in Nome and Bethel. The dormitory scheduled for Fairbanks was not constructed and was not wanted by parents in rural Alaska because the area high school concept was developed.

ADDITIONALLY, the completion of local education in rural Alaska will be determined by the 21 local education districts created July 1, 1976, with the passage of Senate Bill 35. These newly - created districts will be afforded the opportunity to control education on a local level. They will determine how local communities will resolve parental concerns regarding how the negotiated settlement is to be implemented.

Now it is up to the voters to decide whether we will provide educational facilities in remote areas of the state that will comply with the negotiated settlement.

It is my hope that the Molly Hootch case will be permanently closed.

Sam Kito, a lifetime Alaskan, is president of the Alaska Federation of Natives.

AFN cites education problems

By JEANNE ABBOTT
Daily News Staff Writer

Less than two years after State-Operated Schools (SOS) were decentralized by the Alaska Legislature, the new rural school districts are finding unforeseen problems of organization. Native leaders at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention Friday spelled out such problems as substandard schools, limited budgets and social impact on village communities.

The decentralization of SOS created 21 rural education attendance areas (REAA) throughout Alaska to provide bush areas with local control over their schools.

"IT'S TRUE, WE do have local control over our schools and are practicing self determination," said Bob Clark of Dillingham.

"It's finally our system, and we have a hand in our own education. It's a milestone within the Native Alaska movement," said Bob Schaeffer of Kotzebue.

But, both Clark and Schaeffer pointed to a number of problems that have arisen during the past year as new school districts were forming:

—THE NEW DISTRICTS are taking over "substandard" Bureau of Indian Education schools. "These are schools the bureau has always resisted bringing up to par," Schaeffer said.

—The 21 new administrations have been expensive to put together and Schaeffer indicated all regions have budget deficits.

—More thought needed to be given to the impact on communities, when children who would normally attend school elsewhere will be educated at home, Clark said. "Do we have enough food? Will it mean more welfare?" he asked.

—THE NATIVE CULTURE needs to be instituted in the schools. "We need to develop a system a lot more flexible," said Clark.

—"The state would dearly love to make the REAAs into boroughs so they can be taxed. We're not taxed now, but if we're not careful, we will be," Clark said.

Since spring of 1975, the new rural districts have been organizing their administrations.

"The regional attendance areas are basically organized. It's time to deal with the thrust of the bill," Schaeffer said.

ADN 10/23/76

-Anchorage Daily News, Friday, December 3, 1976

ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Our views:

State schools

True to the intention of the celebrated Molly Hootch case, which directed the state to provide high school education within rural villages, plans are proceeding to do so with all due speed.

We are pleased to see the state Department of Education moving with the necessary dispatch to fulfill the court settlement. Since a $59 million bond issue for state schools was passed in the Nov. 2 election, the department has laid elaborate groundwork in preparation for construction. Most projects authorized by the bond will be under way during 1977, and many projects are expected to be completed by 1978.

So far, the department indicates that 20 to 30 new buildings, either kindergarten to 12th grade or grades 9 to 12, will be started next year. Additions will be made to approximately 20 other structures for secondary programs; 20 more will be upgraded to meet fire, safety and health codes. In all, that means 70 to 80 projects are already planned to serve bush students.

Not only is the department moving rapidly toward this construction, but it seems to be making every effort to get the local communities involved in how the schools should be built.

The establishment of 21 new rural school districts last year has made a big difference in the department's approach to the projects.

This month there will be a workshop in Anchorage for school boards, about 70 people, to train them in developing educational specifications. Out in the communities, staff from the Department of Education is helping districts with plans for programs and building design.

Meanwhile, the Department of Public Works has already hired site investigation teams in some districts to do surveys and make soil tests. The department is now advertising for architects, and hopes to coordinate district projects with an organized process of selection.

But here too, the local communities are able to get involved. Recent legislation provides that individual districts may administer school construction through a grant program if it does not want the Department of Public Works to have the responsibility. Districts using this option can select their own architects, and monitor their own construction projects.

It all means that local people will have a major say in where and how the local schools will be built. And, we are hopeful this will result in new buildings that are better fit to serve Alaska's villages.

Bond Issue Will Fund 70-80 School Projects

All-Alaska Weekly, December 3, 1976

The proposition to issue $59.6 million in bonds for new construction and remodeling of schools in Alaska passed on Nov. 2 and sixteen of the 21 new rural school districts which were formed as a result of the well-known and now-settled Molly Hootch case will come under the statewide construction project; and as a result some 2,780 students who have had to leave their home towns to receive a secondary education will now be able to attend school at home.

Of the total bond issue $20 million will go for rural secondary school construction. Some rural districts will be building new facilities, while others will be remodeling existing facilities to handle secondary enrollment.

Overall, 32 rural and urban districts throughout Alaska will be funded under the bond issue, and the total number of construction projects will number between 70 and 80. Construction will begin in some areas this summer, and all construction should be completed by December of 1978.

"We'd like to tell everyone in the state how grateful we are that the bond issue passed," said Katherine Hurley of Wasilla, president of the Alaska State Board of Education. "It was wonderful to see the support we had from all over the state, and that people really supported education for the rural areas.

"Even in the cities they did. Otherwise it would not have passed. This speaks well for the kind of issue that it was, and it shows that if you really have a need people will vote for it."

PLEASED BY OUTCOME

"Frankly, I'm very happy and pleased," said State Board of Education member Darwin Heine, of Fairbanks. "With things in kind of an unknown situation with the pipeline winding down, I wasn't too sure about any of the bond issues. I'm happy it came out as well as it did.

"As far as education in the state is concerned, we can now move forward with the commitments the Legislature, Department of Education, State Board of Education and Governor have made to all the people, particularly in the rural areas where there are minimal school facilities."

"I'm very pleased," said state board member Jan Hohman, of Nome. "I was rather worried. I didn't think the larger cities would go for it, although it's certainly needed in the rural areas.

"Our son is not that far from high school age. If you're a parent in the community and have to send your kids away after eighth grade, it really hits home. Passing the bond issue was the only fair thing to do.

"It's been totally unfair to send young children from their parents. I'm really excited the bond ixsue passed," Hohman said.

State Board member Thelma Langdon, of Anchorage, said, "I'm delighted the bond issue passed.

"I'm disappointed Anchorage didn't go for it as much as I was hoping (approximately 24,000 voted no and 20,000 voted yes), but the number of Anchorage people that did vote for it made if possible for the bond issue to pass."

Several key groups supported the bond issue in Anchorage, Langdon noted.

"Sue Linford, an Anchorage school board member, worked with several committees to support the bond," Langdon said.

"The campaign in Anchorage media-wise tipped the balance," said state board member Malcolm Roberts, of Anchorage. "Without that, the bond issue wouldn't have happened.

"I'm gratified that the bond issue passed because the schools are needed, and it reflected an understanding on the part of urban Alaskans for the very real needs of Alaska's children in smaller communities."

TURNING POINT

"The turning point was the TV campaign explaining the issue. We're meeting a very real problem. Children have been taken from their homes for decades. The TV spots clearly explained the importance of the bond issue," Roberts said.

Board member August Anderson, of Sitka, said he was "surprised for one, and happy for another. We apparently can see the sensitivity of the people. It's pretty clear how they all feel.

"It had to be done sooner or later. Passing the legislation for the Regional Education Attendance areas and not providing schools is like an empty lunch box. The funding is necessary to get some action.'"

Anderson said some persons he talked to had mixed reaction about the bond issue.

"Some said, the villages are dying, why preserve them. I say we are morally obligated to help our fellow man," Anderson said.

Board member Lt. Col. Terry Brown of Fort Richardson, said, "I'm very happy. I've been out to some villages and seen the need for schools, and needless to say I'm extremely happy to see the money passed by the voters. It shows a greater awareness than we were willing to anticipate of the need for improved school facilities in rural areas.

"The initial thought was that metropitan areas might defeat the bond issue, if it were to be defeated. There was a big effort to acquaint the public with the importance of the bond issue. It was a big education effort," Brown said.

(EXCERPT)

AVCP-Yupiktat Bista seek contracts to run twenty-eight schools

Tundra Times 12/8/76

According to Mr. Carl Jack, Executive Director of the Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc. and Yupiktak Bista, Inc., plans are underway to study the feasibility of AVCP, Inc. contracting for the operation of the 28 BIA schools in the AVCP (Bethel) Region. "The plan to do a feasibility study for the take over of the 28 BIA schools by AVCP is the result of concerns expressed by the people from the villages that currently have BIA schools" stated Carl Jack. "Their concern is whether the quality of Education will suffer when REAA's take over their schools due to a lack of adequate funding."

The current goal of the State Department of Education is to take over all BIA schools in the next three (3) years or by 1979. Further, the State Commissioner of Education is trying very hard to get the BIA to agree to keep funding the BIA schools even after REAA takes them over. Further the State Department of Education wants the BIA to keep paying for the following for 5 years after the REAA takes the BIA Schools over:

(a) AVEC costs (19 schools)
(b) Maintenance costs (32 schools)
(c) Hot Lunch Program (32 schools)
(d) New construction costs
(e) Take all Title monies and
(f) Operations including salaries, etc.

It is estimated that over the next 8 years, if the BIA schools are taken over by REAA's, that this will cost the AVCP region more money than the BIA Bethel Agency get to run the schools and other programs, due to the fact that the responsibility for paying for education will go from State to local government through Unorganized Borough concept that the State is working on.

The State of Alaska has been very reluctant to spend any of its general fund for bush education. The money from oil and other resources currently goes into the State general fund and currently the state is meeting their responsibility for bush education by two primary sources, one is through bond issues in which the public pays for it and the other is through BIA funding.

"The final decision for AVCP to take over the 28 BIA schools is contingent upon several factors: first is the full authorization by the AVCP delegates to undertake a feasibility study for the administration of the schools under contract with BIA. Second is the results of the feasibility study and third, which is probably more important than the first two is the consent from the villages for AVCP to administer the schools" Mr. Jack stated. "We have submitted a letter to the BIA notifying them of our intent to contract for these schools with copies to the Alaska Commissioner of Education and affected REAA Boards and Superintendents. This move we have taken is within the spirit of the Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act and as long as we intend to contract for these schools, the BIA cannot transfer them to the REAA's. If all goes well, AVCP will become the largest educational agency within the State of Alaska and will be able to maintain, if not escalate, the Federal support of the BIA schools." Mr. Jack further stated.

CARL JACK, Executive Director of the Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc. and Yupiktak Bista, Inc.

Tundra Times Wednesday, December 22, 1976

State to get tough on rural school design quality

by Bob Speed
Ketchikan Daily News

Richard H. Holden, deputy commissioner of the Public Works Department says the state is moving toward a "get tough now" policy on architectural quality in public schools.

His statement came Friday as part of the final presentation before the Alaska School Board meeting in Ketchikan three days last week.

Discussion centered on buck-passing by state agencies and private architects which resulted in construction of an inadequate school building in the village of Shismaref, near Kotzebue. Holden used the case as just one example of inadequate planning and inspection.

Board member Jan Hohman, of Nome, noted that children in Shismaref have no running water for showers after physical education classes and that the school sometimes doesn't receive enough power for both lights and heat at certain times of day. "So they have to decide whether they want to see or be warm," Mrs. Hohman said.

Architect Malcolm Roberts, appearing with Holden before the board, agreed that the situation in the village of fewer than 250 people "is a mess," saying "I think it's fortunate the Shishmaref thing didn't hit the press before the (state school constuction bond) election."

The answer, he said, lay in designing a set of prototype plans to standardize school construction in the future.

"You can't take three classrooms, take out some walls, put up a chalkboard, put a basketball net above that and put a wrestling mat on the wall to protect the blackboard and call it a multi-purpose room," he said, which is what happened in Shishmaref.

He said a school design must fit the needs of the local community it will serve, as well as the climate and geology of the area. He said a building code for school construction is now being formulated by the public works department, an effort applauded by the board. He said the code would reduce construction costs and prevent many mistakes common to non-standardized construction. The public works department is responsible for all school construction in the state, except when delegated to other agencies by the legislature.

Board member Beverly Horn said after the meeting that rural schools have enough problems without inadequate construction in the first place. She said the state has no money to replace buildings lost in fires or other calamities, adding that at least six bush schools have been lost to fire in the past five years. She said insurance is either prohibitively expensive for rural schools or nonexistent due to inadequate fire protetion facilities and training. She said children whose bush schools are destroyed and who live in communities where no other building is available for classes have little choice but correspondence study.

Another problem common to rural schools is vandalism, board members said. Holden said the best way to prevent vandalism is to get entire village populations involved in school construction, even if it's "moving rocks or laying carpet." He said pride in the finished product would be "the best deterrent."

Holden said the problems in the small town were examples of what should not be done, telling the board that blame ranged from the village itself, where decisions were made to alter building plans, to state agencies where people did not adequately inspect either the plans or construction when under way. He said he had fired one employe as a result of the Shishmaref boondoggle.

TRAVEL TROUBLE

Barbara Dirks of Akutan was fairly well determined to be at the recent Regional School Board meeting in Cold Bay. With this in mind, she arranged with the Coast Guard to be taken to Adak, hoping to catch a daily Reeve flight to Cold Bay. After 17 hours enroute, there was no flight from Adak, except to Anchorage, which she reached on Friday evening. She reserved a seat on the first Reeve flight the next morning. However, when Saturday morning came, the Electra was cancelled. She called Winship for a charter; it was cancelled because of weather. Finally she chartered with Orin Seybert and they started to Cold Bay. He touched down several times, reaching Cold Bay at 4:30 that afternoon. The meeting had concluded at 3:00 and Mrs. Dirks' 33 hours in transit availed her nothing as far as that meeting was concerned. She has now gone to Anchorage and will remain there until she comes to Sand Point for the meeting in February.

Other news in the region includes the cross-skiing program in False Pass and Nelson Lagoon, funded by Indian Ed. money. All of the equipment for a significant cross-country ski program has finally reached the villages. The only difficulty is that there is no snow.

The Aleut January 21, 1977

TUNDRA DRUMS January 22, 1977

TOKSOOK ANGRY AT REAA TAKE-OVER

By Janet Shantz

A decision by the Lower Kuskokwim School District to take over the Toksook Bay BIA-operated school has caused widespread dissatisfaction in that community. People there say they don't want the LKSD.

In a letter to Al Weinberg, superintendent of the LKSD, and Joerene Hout, LKSD Board Chairperson, the Toksook Bay school board wrote that "every adult in this village opposes the transfer of the elementary school from the BIA to the State." The letter was signed by 100 villagers.

One of the villagers biggest complaints is that they were not consulted before the takeover decision was made. That decision came at the LKSD's November meeting in Platinum, where the board adopted the policy "that the District will assume the operation of BIA elementary schools in each village where a district-operated high school program is established."

Weinberg agreed that people are upset about the way the decision was made. But, according to him, it would have been difficult to have done it any other way. At the time the takeover decision was made, he said, they were under pressure from the Department of Education and plaintiffs in the Hootch case to get the construction phase of secondary programs under way. He said construction decisions could not be made without knowing who was going to operate the elementary schools. At the same time, the BIA in Juneau told the LKSD that they had to know by January first which schools the LKSD was going to take over in 1977-78. Weinberg said those deadlines gave the LKSD no time to publicize the takeover. He added, "I suppose we could have done more, but we didn't."

When the village learned of the takeover decision, they wrote in a December 17 letter to Weinberg and Hout that they didn't want the LKSD to take over the BIA school for these reasons;

"1. We find operation of the BIA school here to be superior to the operation of the state high school.

(Continued

A. The food program is better. The children receive more, and do not have to pay for it. Many times the family cannot afford to pay for the food the high school charges for.

B. We do not see the high school to be as equipped as the BIA school The high school has many expensive items that cannot be used, but the BIA school has more books for our children.

C. The BIA has and uses more full-time teacher aides from our village. This makes the BIA pupil-teacher ratio as good, if not better, than the state high schools.

2. We are very disturbed by your statements that the reason for LKSD take-over of the BIA 7th and 8th grades was for money reasons. We are concerned about our childrens education, not how much money you of the LKSD can get by counting our childrens heads.

3. If the state takes over the BIA elementary school, we are afraid there will be less money to keep our teacher-aides and cook with a job..."

Other letters were written to Hout and Weinberg asking that the LKSD decision be reconsidered. None of the letters were answered until January 6 because they both had gone out of town for about a month.

During that time, the frustrations of the Toksook people grew. They called a meeting of the five United Villages of Toksook on January 8, and specifically invited Hout to come to that meeting and answer their questions. Because she was still out of town, Richard Hazen, business manager of the LKSD. went in her place. The villagers there say he gave them no definite answers, and that sending no one would have been better than sending someone who could not give them answers. Hazen said that he "gave them as definite answers as he could."

The people of Toksook are under the impression that the lunch program that is now provided free in the BIA school, would cost them when the LKSD takes over. Weinberg said that low income families have never had to pay for lunch. "In all of the (LKSD) village schools, every student qualifies for free lunch except boarding students. And boarding students are given their lunch money by the school district." He said that the meal that the LKSD provides is a "Type B" lunch which does not differ significantly from the Type A lunch that the BIA provides. And he said local community school committees would have the option of upgrading that lunch with the budget that they are given.

Weinberg said that reasons for taking over elementary schools in villages where there is an LKSD secondary program is to achieve economies of scale. When a school system is under one organization space can be shared, as well as equipment and personnel. There would be no need to duplicate expensive facilities such as water and sewer systems. And he said that the transition between elementary and high school would be smoother because there would be one community school committee, one principal and one staff dealing with the education. According to Weinberg, it's "educationally more sound, and it's economical."

The LKSD does not have to take over elementary schools where a secondary program is established, but Weinberg said it is more cost effective that they do so. Cost effectiveness is important to Weinberg who said that "if education is cost effective, it assures that quality be maintained."

As for Toksook's reluctance to join the LKSD, Weinberg said "in my 7 years here there has been a cry for local control." Now that local control is a reality, people still prefer to leave decisions about their education to the federal government—to which they only have an advisory function."

But it appears that villages with BIA schools exercise a good deal of local control. As Bill Benton of the Bethel BIA office said, "The school boards are only advisory, but we listen." For example the final decision about whether or not a teacher is retained is made by the village. They also have the power to accept or reject programs. "We don't force anything down their throats anymore. We've come a long way," Benton said.

Weinberg said the BIA education program is a good one, and feels the LKSD can do equally well. He said change is difficult because people,"know about the BIA, have dealt with them and know what to expect. They are comfortable with that relationship, and are reluctant to give it up."

Will they have to give it up? If the village asks the BIA to stay—can they? Benton said, the situation is a "galloping mess" right now.

An informed source said that shortly after statehood, a memorandum agreement was entered into between the state Department of Education and BIA officials. That memorandum considered the eventual provision of all education by the state, and the transfer of that function from the BIA to the State Department of Education. A provision in that agreement requires that great efforts be made to gain the consent of villages before any transfer from the BIA to the state is made.

There are some who are now saying that no great effort was made to gain the consent of Toksook Bay before that transfer was carried out.

This is a question that affects more villages than Toksook Bay. Nunapitchuk, too, is scheduled to lose their BIA school because of their secondary education program. Kwigillingok, who is eligible for a high school under the Hootch settlement, has withdrawn its request for one, in order not to lose its BIA elementary school, and a petition in Kipnuk is asking that the BIA elementary school not be transferred over to the LKSD.

The question of the state taking over the BIA schools will be talked about at the LKSD meeting in Kipnuk on Saturday, and it is the topic of a public hearing scheduled for January 29 in Bethel.

BIA SETS TAKE-OVER POLICY

Tundra Drums
2/5/77

The Lower Kuskokwim School District has repealed a policy that would have allowed tem to take-over certain BIA elementary schools. That action came at the LKSD Board meeting in Kipnuk on January 22.

The two-month old policy which caused an uproar at the village level stated "That the District will assume the operation of BIA elementary schools in each village where a district operated high school is established." When that policy was made public, it met with resistance from villages where people said they had not been consulted about the take-over before a decision was made.

Just a week after the LKSD rescinded its take-over policy, the BIA came out with a statement that said no school would be transferred unless the village agreed to it. These actions have virtually ensured that there will be no mandatory school transfers in the forseeable future.

The idea of school transfers is not new. A memorandum agreement was entered into between the State Department of Education and BIA officials just after statehood. That agreement considered the eventual transfer of all BIA schools to create a single education system. Negotiations to that end have continued since 1963.

The LKSD became involved in school transfers after Senate Bill 35 created Regional Education Attendance Areas, (REAA's) last year. That move was designed to bring local control into the school system.

After SB-35 became a reality, the BIA Area Director wrote to all of the newly elected REAA school boards. According to a statement made at the recent AVCP Convention, by Emil Kowalczyk, of the BIA office in Juneau, "In March of 1976, the Area Director wrote each of the newly elected REAA school boards of our willingness to coordinate operation of our BIA day schools with the Reaa's. Should the REAA desire to assume the ity for the control and operation of BIA day schools, this option was made available to them."

Based on that March letter the LKSD understood it had permission from the BIA to take-over schools, and came up with the take-over policy in November, that has been repealed.

The 1975 Indian Self-Determination Act has much to do with the policy that the BIA has now formulated. That Act guarantees that native people will be involved in decisions that affect them. Based on the Self-Determination Act, and village imput that resulted

village imput that resulted from the LKSD take-over decision, the BIA policy now states that there will be no transfers made without village agreement.

At the public hearing on January 29, it became clear that villages can have both the BIA elementary school and a state high school.

Al Weinberg, Superintendent of LKSD, said that there will be secondary programs in villages that are guaranteed one under the Hootch settlement. He said that he will recommend to the LKSD Board that construction in five villages begin this year. These are, Kipnuk and Akiak, because they were both named in Bond Issues in 1974 and 1976, Kwigillingok, because it has the most long standing request for a high school; Nunapitchuk, which presently has a secondary program underway in an inadequate facility, and Atmautaluk, which has a partial program.

As for the future, Joerene Hout, Chairperson of the LKSD Board said, "That the ultimate goal of the state is to have one education program."

But recent action by the state might not bear that out. Negotations between the BIA and the state for the transfer of schools ended on December 29. The BIA offered what has been called a "generous settlement," and the state turned it down. Because of that the BIA ended the negotations which had been going on since 1963, and declared all earlier agreements with the state null and void.

Included in the BIA offer to the state was a years supply of fuel, all the necessary supplies to begin the school year, funds to carry both the hot lunch and the teachers aide program for two years in all schools being transfered, to complete any new construction or major alterations that were scheduled and funded, and finally all buildings and real property were to be transfered at no cost to the state.

Why didn't the state accept the offer? Weinberg said he thought the state was holding out for a better offer. Another source suggested that the state is actually not ready to pick-up the costs of a single education system, and purposely caused the negotiations to be broken off.

Whatever it is that may be going on, the LKSD and BIA policies set recently seem to indicate that Alaska's dual education system will continue indefinatly.

Tundra Times 3/2/77

TT asks —

What kind of shape other REAA's are in

Just how are the Regional Education Attendance Area's (REAA) doing as they approach the end of their first year as independent school districts? Are they providing quality education to students while staying within their financial boundaries? Or are instructional services suffering due to lack of funds?

The Tundra Times contacted a number of the REAA's to find out if the problem confronting the Bering Straits School District is the exception or the rule for the new REAA's.

John Farley, Chairman of the Aleutian Region School District was confident that his schools will stay within their budgets. "We've been on top of the situation from the beginning. We're in the black now and hope to come out of the year within our budget." he said.

Funding Not Adequate

"Funding was not adequate," Farley continued. "In order to make it we had to cut transportation costs and minimize staffing in the administrative areas, but not in the teaching areas."

The Aleutian Region School District eliminated the hot lunch program from their budget at the beginning of the school year. "We realized we couldn't afford it and it was felt the communities didn't want it then," Farley said, "So far we've had no negative responses."

In the Bethel area the Lower Kuskokwim School District deals with the hot lunch program in another way. "We went from providing a Type A lunch (main course, potatoes, vegetable, dessert, milk) to providing a Type B lunch (soup, sandwich, fruit, milk)," said Richard Hazen, Business Manager for the REAA. "The meal is still nutritious and this has resulted in a savings of about $140,000 alone this year. The savings was not so much in the food as in the cost of personnel to prepare the meal." Hazen continued.

Jim Zuelow, Superintendent of the Iditarod School District said his schools also switched to the Type B lunch program.

"In general we look forward to ending the year with a balanced budget and our policy is to provide the best quality education with the resources we have." Zuelow said. "We are, though, concerned with the adequacy of the current financing system."

BIA Transfer

The Northwest Arctic School District not only assumed control of the state schools, but also picked up two Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. Mary Schaeffer, a board member of the REAA commented, "We'll make it through the year although we started out with a deficit. We've had to make cuts in maintenance and upgrading of schools, that will have to wait until we get more funding." she said.

"We would have been ok if we hadn't had to take over the two BIA schools. We didn't get any transitional funds from the BIA." said Mrs. Schaeffer.

Dennis Tiepelman, Executive Director of Mauneluk Association agreed with Mrs. Schaeffer and commented on the statewide situation. "Everybody came in with budget constraints and problems. We had to look closely at our funding and manage." he stated.

Robert Clark, Chairman of the Southwest Region School District commented his REAA was fortunate that their schools were close to the regional center (Dillingham). "We anticipated carry-over funds from last year and we had made plans to use the money to help us get through this year," Clark said, "But some regions ended last year with large deficits and we had to give the funds to them."

Careful Management

Clark went on to say that his REAA would make it through the year "with careful management and tightening of the purse strings."

It appears that, although the new school districts are operating on limited and carefully managed budgets, they are not sacrificing quality educational standards.

Perhaps feelings of the many involved in administering education in the rural areas were summed up best by Robert Clark when he stated, "things are a hell of a lot better than they were two years ago."

Sen. Stevens asks REAA food aid

3/2/77

Tundra Times

Concerned that three school districts have now discontinued hot lunch programs, Senator Ted Stevens today sent a telegram to Secretary of Agriculture Bergland requesting that additional federal support be furnished to the State.

"Unlike most other federal programs which realize the cost differential between Alaska and the lower 48, the Department of Agriculture does not provide any additional funds to our school districts.

"That means that the federal support may totally cover the cost of a lunch or hot breakfast in Mississippi while it would cover only half the cost in Alaska." Stevens said.

The Bering Straits School District recently joined with Fairbanks and Juneau in discountinuing the federally subsidized program.

Bering Straits REAA in cash crunch

Village students boycott classes over cutbacks

From Our Anchorage Bureau

Students in Shishmeref, White Mountain and Teller boycotted classes last week and effectively closed schools protesting the termination of 25 school employees and the elimination of the hot lunch program.

The sharp cutbacks were made by Superintendent Ron Hohman in an effort to reduce a projected June deficit of $600,000 for the Bering Straits Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA).

According to Hohman state funding to the REAA was insufficient at the beginning of the school year and they were forced to start out with a $900,000 deficit. Cuts made in administrative and other areas reduced the deficit to an estimated $599,000 and last weeks move terminating teacher aides, cooks, custodial personnel and cancelling the hot lunch program is expected to drop the deficit by another $142,000.

Hohman traveled to Juneau late last week to meet with Education Commissioner Marshall Lind and members of the State Legislature. The school district is seeking a supplemental appropriation to help balance out the year.

Following hearings held by the House Health, Education and Social Service Committee on the financial status of the REAA's Hohman appeared confident of the outcome. "We were very well received by the Committee," he said, "I'm very optomistic that corrective action will be taken."

Commissioner Lind disagrees with Hohman's allegations of inadequate state financing of the school district. "I see no legitimate grounds to support a request for a supplemental appropriation at this time," Lind said, "They need to take another close look at their total budget and report to the Department what the real deficit is."

The$60 million training exercise — snafus and foulups delay bush ed program

by John Greely

Juneau

Widespread confusion, coupled with bureaucratic foulups, pose a real danger to the scheduled start this summer of a $60 million expansion of rural high schools authorized by voters.

The construction program — designed to help end decades of school discrimination agianst Alaska's village residents — probably will get off to a feeble start.

However, the eventual success of the largest bond issue adopted by voters last November hinges once again on the ability of state and local officials to overcome a history of snafus that left many bush schools unbuilt or so badly constructed they are hardly habitable.

In the meantime, some state officials have begun to view the big construction program as something of a "training" exercise for local educators who increasingly are seeking to escape what they see as a paternalistic attitude of state government toward them.

The confusion and foulups stem from attempts by the state to do just that — give to the villages control they have never enjoyed over education of their children.

In 1975, the legislature disbanded the centralized State-Operated School System and created 21 new school districts. For some of the hundreds of villages touched by this move, it meant their first contact with local government of any kind.

It was an historic decision, one aimed at breaking a trend that had kept Native secondary education in the hands of mostly White bureaucrats many miles and cultures removed.

The trend had begun in Alaska 70 years earlier, in 1905, when the territory was empowered by Congress to create a dual school system for Whites and Natives.

The legislation, dubbed the Nelson Act, left it to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), to educate Native children by exporting them to boarding schools in other states. Those White or mixed-blood children leading a "civilized life" in the bush were sent to schools built by the territory's tobacco tax revenue or local donations.

Dozens of "Nelson schools" were erected, while many Native children left for schools in Oregon or Oklahoma, and many more stayed behind to forego a high school education.

Eventually, the BIA built three boarding schools in Alaska for Natives of high school age. The fourth and largest, Mt. Edgecumbe, was fashioned out of an old Naval air station at Sitka in 1947.

However, the forced airplaning of Native students to other states continued when their demands for schooling exceeded the capacity of the four federal boarding homes.

Aftger statehood in 1959, it took years for a fledgling government to recognize its responsibilities and extract them from BIA purview, a process that is unfolding still today at 44 schools operated by the federal agency.

Finally, in 1966, when nearly 900 students were being sent to high schools outside each year, the state acted.

But, the regional high schools built with state money in Nome, Kodiak and Bethel followed the same trend of territorial days, forcing Native kids to leave their families for nine months of each year.

The same consequences — disharmony in village families, drug and alcohol abuse, high drop-out rates and even suicides in the boarding schools — also followed in some cases.

It didn't take long for the state to realize the regional schools were largely failures, and in 1968, the first bond issue for construction of secondary schools in the villages was placed on the ballot. The $10 million issue passed easily.

Even with larger bonds — the $60 million of 1976 is the biggest single issue ever approved — being placed on the ballot and accepted by voters every two years after that, it was a slow and painful process to bring education closer to the villages.

For example, the state attempted to reach those children who didn't want or weren't allowed to leave home for an education by increasing its correspondence studies program tenfold.

The program worked in some cases, but the lessons often were irrelevant to village life or fell victim to untrained parents unable to supervise their children's formal education.

Soaring costs of erecting fully equipped schools in the bush — the price of an average school quadrupled in 10 years to more than $200 a square foot in 1976 — pointed to the biggest problem, however.

Too often, schools that were authorized in bond issues were delayed as the state borrowed from one project's budget to finish another.

Or worse, the schools that were built proved to be shoddy and a severe drain on local schools to maintain.

In the community of Tanana, for instance, a vocational building was erected last year, but school officials soon were outraged when they found overhead wiring made many of the machines unusable. A shower was installed dangerously close to the arc-welding machine, and students and instructors couldn't talk over the noise generated by the building's exhaust system.

The problem largely was one of supervising contractors in remote areas through periodic visits to the site.

But, there were problems at the other end as well.

Holy Cross, for example, wanted to start a high school program with a small addition to its existing grade school building. Funds for the $326,000 project were authorized by voters in 1974.

The job was not put out to bid in 1975. When bids were called in 1976, the lowest was 50 per cent too high, chiefly beause the state required the addition to be placed on pilings, local officials said.

No buildings have ever been placed on pilings in Holy Cross. (For a detailed look at troubles experienced on one school project, see accompanying story page 7.)

It was against this backdrop that the legislature concluded in 1975 that rural schools could be better built and administered at the local level.

So, creation of the vast Alaska Unorganized Borough School Districts was followed early in 1976 by separate legislation allowing local educators to receive construction grants from school bonds, or elect to have the state continue building their schools.

The legislation took effect last July, just as the 21 Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAA), were moving out of their year-long transitional phase into full autonomy.

Continued

At the same time, lawyers were settling the celebrated "Molly Hootch" case, in which legal claims surrounding the rights of some 2,800 high school-aged children in 120 villages were argued for three years.

Although the Alaska Supreme Court ruled the state was under no legal duty to provide schools in all villages, it was an unanswered moral question nonetheless.

In September, lawyers on both sides agreed to a schedule for starting schools in each of the villages by the spring of 1979.

Meanwhile, more than half of the REAAs elected to take construction grants from the state, a move no one envisioned would be as complicated as it has turned out to be.

The legislature, leery of the building track record of the Department of Education, turned the $60 million over to the Department of Public Works last spring.

Thus, in order for districts to secure the money, they must pass inspection of two major state agencies — Education, where the guidelines of the Hootch settlement and basic curriculum questions are monitored, and Public Works, where approval of all designs and specifications, as well as the checkbook itself, rests.

Public Works, meanwhile, has been undergoing a major organizational shakeup in its now-defunct Division of Buildings. Two divisions, General Design and General Construction and Maintenance, replaced one.

Richard Holden, deputy commissioner of public works, said the split was made to create a "check" on state builders and to rid his agency of "cumbersome" procedures.

Holden's plan apparently has only just begun.

It was his job to issue guidelines for the construction grants to be disbursed. The rules went out in mid-December, when superintendents of the 21 new districts gathered in Anchorage for a conference.

The meeting apparently didn't make it clear that the state was retaining tight control over the grant projects, from selection of architects to the payment of bills.

In turn, superintendents unfamiliar with the state bureaucracy were shocked to learn that overhead — ranging from architectural fees to their expenses for attending the December conference — would eat up 15 to 30 per cent of their grant money.

Joe Cooper, superintendent of the Upper Railbelt REAA in Nenana, wrote to his legislator in January protesting "oppressive" state controls and high overhead. He was joined by a chorus of other educators who had applied for grants.

Cooper said he had an architect prepared to draw up plans for three school projects but that Holden had rejected his selection of firms.

In an interview, the deputy commissioner said Cooper's district had been in potential danger because the architect promised to supervise about $12 million worth of construction at sites 500 miles apart, "an impossible task."

Delays piled upon delays — at one point, public works officials had to recover several grant applications that had been forgotten in a file drawer — until the Senate Finance Committee called state officials in for a hearing on Feb. 18.

Holden explained that many of the protests lodged by local educators were unfounded or spawned of inexperience. Several suprintendents were demanding formal regulations for the grant program, but that would take months to push through official channels, he said.

Such overhead as architectural fees had not increased significantly, Holden said, but had just been truely identified for individual projects, rather than kept artificially low and camouflaged by borrowing from other budgets, as was the past practice.

Naturally, overhead on relatively small construction projects will eat up a proportionately greater share of money because they often require as much design and inspection work.

Educators holding a meager $500,000 for a school addition often fail to realize this, he said.

Holden explained his problems adequately, and the hearing apparently served its purpose. Between Feb. 9, when notices of the hearing went out, and late last week, $22 million worth of grant contracts were approved by Education and Public Works.

However, millions more are pending paperwork to be completed in Juneau and far flung villages.

That raises serious questions about whether bids can be let on many of the 30 school projects originally envisioned to start this summer. About half of the 70 jobs authorized by the $60 million bond are scheduled to begin in 1978.

It normally takes 45 to 90 days for a project to be bid after designs are completed, experts say. If contracts are not let until May or June, builders may have a tough chore acquiring materials in time to meet barge schedules critical in the delivery of goods to many villages.

In addition, some experts note that relatively small contracts offered in June generally draw higher bids than identical ones offered in March of each year because bidders are not interested in isolated, marginally profitable jobs until it fits into their other projects.

"I'm just guessing right now," said Tom Lunsford, director of general design, "but I think we can get 25 per cent (of the 30 projects) completed this year."

Senate finance chairman John Sackett, R-Galena, has called for another meeting on the situation March 15-16 here. Superintendents are expected to resume their pleas then that the grants be turned over to their school boards with no strings attached.

Such a radical step probably is not in the offing soon. A large chunk of the state's public works program is tied up in the school bonds.

However, Sackett's committee may give some thought to a suggestion by Cooper and other superintendents that simple after-the-fact auditing be used to replace many of the step-by-step approvals needed under existing guidelines.

Sackett said this week he and other legislators also were interested in possibly increasing the $20,000 ceiling over which all state contracts must go out to bid. That could free some school projects from the state papermill, he said.

In the meantime, Lunsford said, it will take time for local and state officials to learn their new and changing relationships.

"There are some of us," he said, "who see this entire $60 million bond as training."

Bilingual feud halts aid to bush schools

by Rodger Painter

A long-simmering battle between the State Department of Education and federal civil rights officials has quietly halted all federal funds to 21 rural Alaska school districts.

Formal notices that the state and bush school districts have failed to comply with federal demands for bilingual education programs were served on Feb. 4.

The action freezes all applications for 1977-78 school year federal dollars by the recently created Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA) school boards. Also stopped were any "significant increases" in present programs.

State and federal spokesmen were unable to pinpoint the potential amount of aid affected by the order, but a senior official with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), in Seattle said it involved "millions of dollars."

An administrative hearing on the matter has been scheduled for March 21, but both sides expressed hope an agreement would be worked out before then.

Although only the 21 REAA school districts are affected by the order, the Anchorage and Fairbanks schoo' districts also have been negotiating with OCR over bilingual education needs.

Virginia Balderrama, OCR branch chief for education in region X, which includes Alaska, declined to say whether Anchorage and Fairbanks would be cited for noncompliance as "we haven't made that determination yet.

"Anchorage and Fairbanks will be formally notified soon of their compliance status," Balderrama said.

State education officials and OCR have been sparring over who's responsible for bush school districts since initial contact on bilingual education was made in 1971.

The feds claim the Department of Education is responsible for conducting a "language characteristics" survey of students in the 21 rural districts. A model compliance plan could be drafted by the state after that, OCR says.

The federal case is based on two sections of the state constitution, several

- Continued -

state statutes, civil rights laws and a landmark court decision known as Lau.

The state responds that it is not legally responsible for either and is helping the REAAs on bilingual education only out of a "desire to assist the smaller districts."

A 30-page supportive brief by OCR for the March 21 hearing outlines a long negotiating process which started more than two years ago with a formal request for a survey.

At that time, bush education was under the control of the Alaska State-Operated School System (SOS), but it was in the process of being turned over to the Alaska Unorganized Borough School District. The latter agency existed for one year as a transitional vehicle for passing control to REAAs.

SOS made one attempt to conduct a survey — but everyone involved, including the state, doubted its accuracy. The survey showed 4,526 students with a primary language other than English and that 3,508 of them were enrolled in bilingual or bicultural programs.

Standard education tests conducted in 1970 showed fourth grade bush students were 1.4 years behind the national norm. In 1974, those same students, then in the eighth grade, fell to two years behind.

More startling statistics were supplied by a University of Alaska analysis of U.S. census figures. It showed half of the state's Native population had completed no more than the sixth grade, 21 per cent completed eighth grade, 14 per cent attended high school and only eight per cent were high school graduates.

The need for bilingual education in the bush is apparent; the only argument is who's responsible for getting the programs underway.

"Certainly, the department (of education) did agree. . .to assume the lead in developing a voluntary compliance plan on behalf of all districts in the state which did not choose to develop their own directly with OCR," state Assistant Atty. Gen. Ronald Lorensen said in a Feb. 22 letter responding to the notice of noncompliance.

"The department did not do so, however, as a result of any perceived legal responsibility on its part. . .but rather out of a desire to assist the smaller districts," Lorensen wrote, "and especially the newly emerging REAAs, in the difficult and time-consuming task of developing an identification and assessment plan and then carrying it out."

"It has always been our view that OCR would have to proceed against and show that each REAA was in noncompliance. . .if OCR were to seek to withhold any federal funds. . .," Lorensen said.

One informed observer close to the case said the state's position could be construed as an attempt to make clear the lines of responsibility for rural education for future dealings with the federal government. In effect, the state is trying to wash its hands of the matter to avoid future responsibility.

That observation has at least a small ring of truth, according to Sylvia Carlson, who handled most of the negotiations with OCR for the Department of Education. "If we give much more than we should, we're going to set precedents and lose more in the future," Carlson said.

Carlson conceded the state had assumed some responsibility in the matter but not to the extent pressed by the federal government. She blamed the log delays on a "lack of understanding of the Alaska situation on the part of some individuals involved on the federal level."

"Local control of education means something totally different in Alaska; it's not gerrymandering to get around desegregation," Carlson said. "For the first time in Alaska's history, Native people have a chance to decide things for themselves at the local level."

Part of the problem, she said, is that in a lot of bush communities it is not so much a bilingual situation as a "multi-lingual."

In addition, she said, there is the "village English" syndrome, where children pick up some of their Native language and some English but never become proficient at either. The result is a kind of pidgin English.

The Department of Education finally submitted a draft compliance plan in November 1976, after being served with a letter of noncompliance. It was rejected as unacceptable. A second draft compliance plan was submitted a month later. It also was turned down.

It appears that something may be worked out before the REAAs began experiencing serious money problems, but the long delays already have been causing some difficulty. The problem was dumped on the laps of the REAAs during their first year of operation when they already had enough headaches.

At least two districts are moving on their own to comply with the OCR mandate. An OCR spokesman said that would not in any way mitigate the state's responsibilities for the other districts.

James Zuelow, superintendent for the Iditarod School District, said his district is moving independently of the state and may have its own plan to submit soon.

Unlike most state officials, Zuelow strongly supported the federal mandate for bilingual education.

"Philosophically, I favor it because it forces schools to look at problems they should be facing but are not," Zuelow said. "I have questions about the strong federal role in education, but they are forcing recognition of the problems."

The Iditarod School District dosn't have "many problems with kids coming to school not speaking English," Zuelow said, but the language deficiencies show in "depressed academic scores." Students simply can't read text books written for their grade level, he said.

REAA's are in deep financial trouble

By NELLIE WARD
From Our Juneau Bureau

Citing maintenance and operation problems and lost funding due to takeover of BIA schools, superintendents of the Bering Straits and Northwest Arctic School Districts told the House Health Education and Social Services Committee last week that they are in deep financial trouble.

Seeking supplemental appropriations to bail the districts out of financial problems, Superintendents Homan and White represent two of three unorganized school districts in the state experiencing problems.

Senator Frank Ferguson (D–Kotzebue), appearing on behalf of the school districts charged that the legislature "has been waiting for four years for an equitable formula from the Department of Education and it has not yet come down and it probably won't for next year." Ferguson charged that had the districts had an equitable formula they probably would not be in the financial badlands that they are. An equitable formula would mean an increase in the instructional unit allotment and an increase for the two districts in area differential, for unique high costs of transportation and maintenance and operation.

Commissioner of Education Marshall Lind said that of the thirty-one city and borough districts and the twenty-one REAA's, only three are in trouble, one only seriously. He said that the Northwest problem arose from the take-over of BIA schools and the abundant federal funding lost in that take-over. With the take-over, large maintenance and operating budgets were lost to be absorbed by smaller department budgets. Lind said that the present formula will not sustain the type of hot lunch, teacher aide program and plant management offered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Lind said that he believes that the Northwest District has handled the cutbacks well by charging those that can afford to pay for hot lunches and reducing the number of teacher and aides to cost-efficient levels.

The Bering Straits District last week made cut-backs that eliminated approximately eighteen positions throughout the Bering Straits region, removal of the hot lunch program and custodians altogether. The reductions resulted in a mass boycott of classes region-wide in the Bering Straits schools. Teachers have, however, kept the doors open and are offering classes to those few that will attend.

Other problems areas that were voiced were the poor condition of state built and maintained schools. Commissioner of Public Works Richard Holden stated that the state's budget for maintenance of buildings remained the same while bonding propositions were passed in large numbers which spread the maintenance budget thin. Both Bering Straits and Northwest Arctic School District spent hundreds of thousands of dollars.

This past construction season to bring schools up to a better level of care. Heating systems and generators were rebuilt or replaced following histories of fires and destruction due to lack of maintenance. Commissioner Holden, testifying before the HESS committee said that it probably would take thirty million dollars, plus or minus five million, to bring the schools up to safe standards. He said that one third of the schools are okay, one third need work and one third could be "thrown away."

Commissioner Lind said that the problems of one district could not be pointed out and worked over in order to come up with a formula that would suit all other schools. He said that the root of the problem should be scrutinized and the formula should come from that. He cited problems with a data-gathering contract with the University for the delay in building a formula that would be equitable. Lind said that the department now has most, or part of the information that they need to proceed and will attempt to make progress as quickly as possible.

Studies completed by rural legislators have shown that if the foundation formula is increased for the rural areas, allowing for the area differential, additional costs involved with the state could push thirty million dollars the first year. Legislators are waiting now to see the governor's proposal for area differential.

Another problem area is the Alaska Village Electrification Corporation (AVEC) contract where the state subsidized the electrification of rural areas where schools were in need of power. The contract was written under the old state-operated school system and will not expire until March 1979. Commissioner Lind feels that education "has been saddled with the responsibility (of electrification) for too long." Alternate means to the present method of providing power and electrification funding are now being explored.

Tundra Times, Wednesday, March 9, 1977

Daily News-Miner, Fairbanks, Alaska, Thursday, March 17, 1977-

Students protest to raise teachers' pay

By DERMOT COLE
Staff Writer

Students at Anderson High School near Clear are planning to boycott classes Monday because they don't think their teachers are getting paid enough.

Bob Crowder, student body president, said 38 of the 48 students at the school have signed a petition saying they will not attend school unless the Upper Railbelt School Board agrees to sign a contract with the teachers.

The students had originally planned to stay out of school until a contract is signed, but a spokeswoman for the students said today that because the teachers might be blamed for a student boycott, it will only last one day.

A petition has also been circulating around town and, of the 115 families in Anderson, 102 have signed. The town has population of 370 and is five miles northwest of Clear Air Force Base.

Kay Carter, one of the parents involved, said there has been some talk about parents keeping elementary school students at home and setting up a picket line.

The teachers are among the 28 in the Upper Railbelt School District, which includes Healy, Cantwell, Anderson and Clear.

They have been without a contract since last spring, according to School Board member Ed Frye, who said negotiations are to resume Friday night. He said the teachers declared an impasse in January.

Frye said he could not discuss details of the negotiations, but Carter said the teachers are asking for a 10 per cent increase in base pay. She said the teachers now receive $13,400 and are asking for $14,700. She also said that the teachers are among the lowest paid in the state.

"The school district has the funds," she said, and added, "We don't know why they are not giving their teachers contracts."

Crowder said the students believe the teachers are entitled to a pay increase. The students are "determined to stay out of school," he added.

Frye said Wednesday he did not know of the students' petition and added, "I think that the parents are probably uninformed on the negotiations and the negotiations process."

No parents have contacted him regarding the situation, he said, although they may have contacted other board members.

Carter said the teachers have talked about a strike, but instead they decided to "first make the community aware and then the community would be behind them in sympathy."

Legislation would reimburse for school construction

From Our Juneau Bureau

House Bill 89 passed out of the Health Education and Social Services (HESS) Committee of the House last week provides that the State shall reimburse school districts within the organized borough, monies paid for school construction incurred before July 1, 1976 and 90 per cent of their payments after July 1, 1976 for principal and interest in loans and cash paid for construction debts. The original proposal by Sam Cotten, D-Eagle River, was to pay 80 per cent which would cost the state an estimated eleven million dollars for 1978. The state currently reimburses fifty percent of construction costs for organized borough school districts.

Tundra Times
3/18/77

Representative Al Nakak, D-Nome, said that the state should be consistent in payments of this type and proposed that the amounts should be increased to one hundred per cent making amounts received by organized boroughs compatible with the unorganized boroughs.

Questions were raised by committee members that should the state pay 100 percent to the districts, where would the local control lie and where would the boundaries be drawn. The committee discussed "building a fence" around what should be considered basic education and the facilities required to support that program, in relation to reimbursement of construction dollars.

Eagle students build their own school

By WARD SIMS
Associated Press Writer

With hammers, nails, paint brushes and carpet tacks—plus a little help from the big folks—the 13 high school pupils in Eagle have pulled it off. They have built their own school.

It means they don't have to leave home to attend classes in another community, or to get their learning through correspondence courses.

Working through last summer and the first weeks of the current school year, the 13 high school pupils and adults of Eagle, pop. 105, turned a historic old courthouse into a school.

"I really had serious questions whether they could pull off a high school for 13 kids, but it's worked out very well," says Supt. Carl Peterson of the Alaska Gateway School District. "They had a fantastic time, and they're pleased with the children."

Eagle, on the Alaska-Canadian border 200 miles east of Fairbanks, was a trading center during the Klondike gold rush for miners and prospectors who objected to Canadian laws and taxes.

It actually consists of two villages, Eagle City and Eagle Village, about three miles apart on the Yukon River.

Ken and Judy Marlo, the teachers at Eagle, had a key role in the school project.

From the time school opened on Sept. 7 until the old Wickersham courthouse rang to the shouts of high school kids on a break from classes on Oct. 9, the high school was the Marlos' front room.

The courthouse, built around the turn of the century at Eagle City, needed substantial repairs to make it usable as a school.

The town anted up $7,000, and the local residents pitched in. Some of the labor was paid, but the bulk of the work was for free, and much came from the high school pupils.

"It was the first time that they had had the opportunity to go to school at home, and they certainly weren't going to miss it," said Louise Waller, a school board member from Eagle.

SCHOOL PROJECT—Thirteen students in Eagle, with some help from their elders, recently restored the historic Wickersham courthouse for use as a school, giving the small Alaskan town its first high school.

Civil Rights Office may pull REAA Funds

Tundra Times

4/20/77

The future of many federally funded education programs in Alaska may be in jeopardy unless state educators comply with specific provisions of the Civil Rights Act by June.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) has begun administrative enforcement proceedings against the Alaska State Department of Education and the Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA) because of their failure to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the HEW regulation implementing the law.

The Director of HEW's Office for Civil Rights in Washington, D.C. notified Alaska Education Commissioner Marshall Lind that, "due to the State's continued failure to submit an acceptable plan for identifying the language of, and providing services to, students whose primary or home language is other than English, the Office for Civil Rights would, under the law, have to begin administrative enforcement proceedings."

By taking this action HEW will allow the State and REAA's an opportunity to respond to the allegations before an administrative hearing is held in Anchorage on June 6.

HEW also notified the State and REAA's that although present committments to provide funding for ongoing programs are unaffected, they will defer approval of any new applications or significant increases in the funding of continuing programs.

The Office of Civil Rights has required during the last eleven months that the Department of Education submit a detailed action plan which:

-Describes in reasonable detail how the Department of Education and REAA's will determine the primary or home language of students and assesses the relative language ability of such students in English and other language (s);

-Set forth measurable, minimum standards according to which the REAA's will develop and implement educational programs to repond to the students needs; and

-Sets timeframes for development and implementation of REAA educational plans which will assure effective educational programs for students whose primary or home language is other than English.

Just how did the State find itself in this situation?

According to one educator actively involved in the State's bilingual education program, the problem began sometine ago within the structure of the Alaska State Operated Schools System (SOS).

The source confided that internal turmoil at SOS prevented the Department of Bilingual Education from coming up with the material, and that some superintendents did not respond to a bilingual survey sent out by SOS because they 'didn't feel it was worth anything."

Continuing, the source said bilingual education was not a priority of the State, "It's just another supplementary education program."

"SOS didn't have a committment to bilingual education. Anytime anyone went to Juneau to bargain for money they were willing to trade dollars marked bilingual programs for other programs."

According to Silvia Carlsson of the Department of Education (DOE), the state has submitted three different plans to the Office of Civil Rights since November and all have been rejected.

"It appears that the first plan was probably not adequate," she said. "When the second plan was rejected we decided we needed more help with the procedures and asked the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (Portland) for assistance. They sent up two people and when the plan was finished we were confident we were headed in the right direction," Carlsson continued.

Submitting the latest plan, DOE has been verbally notified this plan has also been rejected.

Carlsson said they have received unofficial word that the Office of Civil Rights would not accept the plan until Bureau of Indian Affairs schools were brought into compliance. She maintains the state has no jurisdiction over the BIA schools and that BIA schools do not have to comply with state educational laws. Furthermore, the BIA schools are exempt from the Civil Rights Act.

DOE'S overall goal is to take an approved plan to each of the REAA's, let them rework it to fit their individual needs, and submit it as their educational plan. All of which must be completed within the next five weeks.

Should no acceptable plan be developed by the June 6 hearing, the Office of Civil Rights has the power to "stop the flow of every federal education dollar in the state for REAA's."

"No one has put down in black and white exactly what funds we're talking about," Carlsson said, "and we asked repeatedly for a list of programs."

Some programs which have been mentioned are: Title I of the Elementary and Secondary School Act; Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Act; Title IV, Indain Education; Johnson O'Malley; and PL-874-815 Funding to School Districts which have federal lands. These funds are for operational and construction expenses.

"We've been working with the Office of Civil Rights and HEW but we haven't been able to get anywhere. We don't disagree there is a problem, we're just not in agreement as to the formula to solve the problem."

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner 5/7/77

State unit delays decision on Railbelt recall election

The Alaska Board of Education, meeting in Fairbanks this week, decided it needs more information before it makes a decision on the petition for recalling three Upper Railbelt school board members.

Friday the board members asked Education Commissioner Marshall Lind to get them legal advice, saying the proceedings are without precedent in Alaska.

The question the board was concerned with was what the law requires regarding the charges and allegations to be placed on the recall ballot.

The petition claims that the board members have consistently voted against the will of the people and that they are incompetent. The board members have created a "turmoil" in the school district by taking uncompromising positions, the petition says.

The decision by the school board to buy a computer for the district was one of the bad decisions the board members made; another was establishing an administrative assistant's position to aid Supt. Larry Nyland, the petition charges.

The Upper Railbelt district includes schools in Anderson, Healy, Cantwell and Clear. The petition names Ed Frye, Gary Crabb and Ruby John as the board members to be recalled.

The statement of reasons for recalling, which is placed on the ballot, is to be as stated in the recall petition, according to the attorney general.

But state education board member Darwin Heine said he thinks the decision to by a computer or hire an assistant superintendent is a proper function of a school board.

Heine was concerned that any public body making an unpopular decision at a local level would be subject to recall if the state board sets a precedent by taking action for a recall election in the Upper Railbelt matter.

Lind said that after receiving advice from the attorney general's office he will call a special meeting as quickly as possible to dispose of the matter.

Department of Education Information Exchange

6/10/77

CSC CONCERNS OUTLINED

What questions should a regional school board ask itself as it develops policy for the community school committees? A small group of representatives from regional boards and the Department of Education met in Anchorage Tuesday and Wednesday to outline those questions. The meeting was the first step in developing materials for regional boards to use with their community school committees, according to Don McKinnon, school district relations specialist.

Alaska Advocate July 28, 1977

Bush schools 1 year after:

The headaches of independence

Unless the city cousins learn something from their rural cousins, we'll lose the battle, said a top bush educator.

by Mary Halloran

Juneau

After a year of independence, Alaska's 21 new bush school districts still face a basic, if more sophisticated, fight for control over the education of 9,000 village youngsters.

Funded completely by the state, the 200 elementary and secondary schools making up the system continue to wrestle with distant bureaucrats over dollars and sense.

Teachers are demanding more control over and asserting their rights in the classroom.

And, from Washington, D.C., a long battle over teaching Native languages in village schools—the federal government is threatening to withhold money if bilingual programs aren't started soon—has been inherited by the Natives themselves.

These were some of the expected problems when, as a product of a quiet revolution in Alaska education, the 21 new districts were opened a year ago.

They were carved from the state's huge unorganized territory—stretching from the Bering Sea to Metlakatla, from the upper Yukon to the end of the Aleutian chain—at a time when across the nation, schools were being closed and districts consolidated, with many facing financial disaster.

For several years, the vast territory was administered through State-Operated Schools (SOS) as one school system. It was an operation beset by difficulties and disagreements. At the core of the problems was the issue of control. Unlike the rest of Alaska's schools, the SOS district was not headed by an elected school board.

In 1975 legislation ended SOS and led to the creation of 21 new districts. Control shifted from an Anchorage-located administrative office to 21 district school boards elected by district residents.

During this first year of independent operation, the new districts faced a myriad of tasks. Many began without a district office, much less the paraphernalia of phones, adding machines and typewriters. Administrators, bookkeepers and clerical help had to be hired, policies set, teachers' contracts negotiated, books and supplies ordered, ad infinitum. This month the districts celebrated their first birthdays, having survived despite the high potential for mishap.

"The smoothness of the whole transition would have to go down as a major accomplishment," said Bill Overstreet, executive secretary of the Association of Alaska School Boards. "Those new boards have done as well as the city and borough boards have done. They've a lot of leadership out there, with a variety of experiences. That caused them to be damn good board members."

Overstreet was particularly pleased with the way the regional boards handled teacher contract negotiations. "These new boards, being new, have been much more appreciative of the concept of local control and much more reluctant to cave in to the unions. They didn't gain local control to give it away to the unions," he said.

Overstreet sees the issue of control continuing, citing legislation introduced last session that would make binding arbitration the final step in any grievance proceeding between district boards and teacher unions. The bill failed by one vote in the senate, with rural legislators making the difference in the outcome. The teachers' organization, NEA/Alaska, already has announced that passage of the bill will be its top priority for the coming session.

"So that question still hangs over our heads. Will our schools be governed by locally elected people or by appointed arbitrtors? Unless the city cousins learn something from their rural cousins, we'll lose the battle," said Overstreet.

Despite the general smoothness mentioned by Overstreet, the transition has had its rough spots. Lower Kuskokwim superintendent Al Weinberg said the biggest problem was the lack of proper preparation for the changeover. "We inherited a seven-million-dollar-a-year business without any proper administrative foundation," said Weinberg. He listed the lack of a district accounting system, insurance and provision for workmen's compensation as examples of major administrative hassles the new district found itself with last July 1.

Another district superintendent, Jim Zuelow of Iditarod Area schools, made similar observations. "I think everybody seriously underestimated what we needed to set up a business office." He explained that equipment and personnel records were inaccurate or missing. A further complication was that nobody knew how much it was going to cost to run a school at any specific site. The SOS accounting procedures did not give the new districts budget information for individual schools.

"The inaccurate and incomplete data we were given was used to develop our administrative systems, so now errors have been compounded. And it's going to cost us money to straighten it out," said Zuelow.

Despite the administrative hassles, both superintendents feel the transition has been a success. "There's absolutely no comparison in the effectiveness with which we operated this year," said Weinberg, who had worked

Continued

Bush schools...

seven years for State-Operated Schools. "We knew how much money we had, we knew where it was and could spend it when and where it was needed."

Another pleased with the changeover is June Nelson, Kotzebue resident and president of the Northwest Arctic school board. "On the whole, people know there sure is a better rapport and relationship. . .they can come in and talk about programs, what they want their kids to learn," she said.

Nelson added, "Funding has been the biggest problem, not in the amount of the lump sum we receive, but just that so many little things have happened to cut into it."

She mentioned on-going negotiations with the U.S. Office of Civil Rights in connection with the district's presumed noncompliance with federal bilingual education guidelines as one of the unexpected costs.

"That's been a special burden. To inherit a bag of worms, something like that has not been pleasant," she stated. The OCR action was initiated against the old SOS system.

An irony of the situation is that the federal agency is threatening to remove federal funds from school districts whose boards are now heavily drawn from Native groups. In effect, the Office of Civil Rights is chastising Native parents for not providing an OCR-approved version of bilingual education to Native youngsters.

Again the underlying issue, as one education official pointed out, is one of control. "The question is what role should the federal government play in how education works in Alaska?" The proceedings are now more than two years old and promise to carry on "indefinitely."

Nelson said federal regulations and accompanying auditors "hampered district operations." The Northwest Arctic district plans to handle the issue by reducing its reliance on federal funds.

It and other districts may be able to do just that, given the generous readjustment in the state's funding program made by the legislature in the recently ended session. Overstreet said passage of Senate Bill 212 "should resolve most of the new districts' problems." The bill establishes a funding floor for small schools and compensates for costs related to isolation. By 1979 the new districts will receive $10 million more than would have been allocated otherwise. City and borough districts likewise will receive an additional $10 million by 1979.

Despite the unexpected costs and budget vagaries of this year, all the districts except one finished in the black. The exception, Bering Straits, was bailed out by a special appropriation of $400,000, which Gov. Hammond cut to $150,000.

In his transmittal message, Hammond said the appropriation was "to reimburse costs for major maintenance of schools incurred by the REAA (district) which should rightly be covered by the state."

High maintenance costs stem from the condition of some of the buildings in the new districts. Inherited from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the buildings were frequently substandard at the time of their transfer to the state and now incur disproportionate maintenance costs.

New construction has its problems, too.

Voters approved nearly $60 million for school construction across the state in the 1976 general election, shortly after the legislature allowed the new districts to receive building money in the form of grants from the state.

But, procedures set up by the Department of Public Works have been confusing and time-consuming for many local superintendents eager to get new construction going during the short building season. (*Advocate*, March 3.)

A running discussion between the districts and public works shows no signs of diminishing.

"I would like to see the Department of Public Works eliminated from the public school construction area . .They're obstructing us," says Carl Peterson, superintendent of the Alaska Gateway district.

"Any conceivable blunders the school districts might have done would be inconsequential compared to what we've gone through trying to move the bureaucracy," he said.

. Weinberg was more resigned, commenting, "We can't expect public works, which is responsible to the legislature, to write us a blank check. Construction's a complex task because of all the agencies involved. It's time-consuming and probably too expensive, but all those bureaucratic hoops are supposed to be safeguards."

This fall the new districts plan to concentrate on curriculum and program development. Most also want to work on the district boards' relationship with the Community School Committees, village advisory groups established under the 1975 decentralization law.

Despite the work and the problems, all seem sure the new way is better. Most think the real payoff is still in the future - that one year is too soon to count successes or failures.

"We believe that we can eventually provide a better quality education to the kids," said Zuelow. "If we didn't believe that, we wouldn't be doing all this."

Whether the payoff comes in one year, five or ten, everybody's happier, if for no other reason than that the problems and solutions are closer to home. As Superintendent Peterson said, "Generally, people here feel very good about the change. They have somebody they can go to and complain if they want to."

Mary Halloran is director of public information and publications for the Alaska Department of Education. She edits the monthly Alaska Education News.

(Tentative Title: REAA Superintendents Address the First Year)

At the October 1977 meeting of the Alaska Association of School Administrators a panel entitled: "REAA Report - The First Year Successes and Failures" took place. Superintendents from five REAAs spoke. Their comments included not only frank statements about both positive and negative aspects of their first year of REAA operation, but also some thoughtful comments on the difficulty of evaluating the situation and needs and opportunities for the future.[1]

The Difficulty of Evaluating the REAAs: Year One

"There is difficulty in evaluating. There was no control in the experiment--but all experiments. All of the state schools went at one time. We don't know what would have happened had some stayed in the state system a while longer. There was such a dynamic environment at the time. There were so many variables operating. It was not just the fact that we were going into a brand new school district, but at the same time we were asked to create new high school facilities, we were asked for bilingual programs....The whole thing occurred in such a dynamic movement of activity. It is hard to say what would have happened had it not all taken place at one time."

"I submit to you that whether something is a success or failure probably depends a lot on the perspective you have. For example, I think many of the local people who felt local control would mean full control of hiring and firing and the whole bit probably look at it as a failure. I think some of the teachers who hoped benefits were going to continue to escalate as they have in the past probably consider it a failure."

Educating the Public

"We had the problem of convincing the district that we were a local school district and convincing the teachers. I don't know that everybody really, really understands that at the present time--that we are a local school district and we have local control."

"Our role in the districts, stated in the most cynical way, was to provide jobs. One of the successes I would hope would be that perhaps we turned people around and got them to think about what they want out of school. Many of the people in our villages were so into the power aspect of getting a say in things that they really didn't know what to do once they got that say. One of our adult education roles was to try to get them to realize what real options they had and letting us contribute to implementing those options."

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[1] These comments were selected and edited by Kathryn Hecht. Given difficulties of tape transcription, the quotes may not be exact but attempts were made to keep the meaning intact.

Board Members, Elections, and Training

"By creating these new districts, you create many, many more board members to elect. You're going to get some inept board members. You're going to get a lot less trained people than when you could pick five or ten of the best around the state. Now we've got hundreds of people on the boards and obviously you are going to get some with much less training. You need a lot of work done. This often causes a problem. I can't even get people to run for some of the seats. The matter of elections is a real difficulty for us. You've got people at one end of the district who don't know anything about the name or reputation of somebody at the other end, and they vote at large."

"They need to learn about the process of negotiating with teachers. If they don't, they can lose control in a hurry. I've had to be patient and try to be tough. I had to do a lot of talking and was becoming unpopular with some of my people. More needs to be done in teaching the people out in the villages as to responsibilities and negotiating and what to look for. Otherwise, the teachers can overpower them and we'd lose a lot of money."

Priorities: Facilities and Personnel

"One of the top priorities we had was to start a secondary school the first year. One of the main problems that had to be faced was not having adequate facilities. It meant we had to rent old houses and renovate them so we could carry on classes. The response on the part of the students was just wonderful."

"...I wasn't ready to take on adult eduation and the adult education I had to take on was how to train somebody to type, how to train somebody to keep books, how to train somebody to keep furnaces going, how to train somebody to even recognize a personnel record, let alone begin to make some kind of entry into it."

Improvement in the System/Opportunities for Improving Programs

"First of all, there was definitely some local autonomy. Not to the degree that some people wanted but certainly much more than what had been given under the state system. Now I think the people feel that the districts are much more responsive to them than someone out of Anchorage or Juneau. Secondly, I think there is great flexibility for a superintendent or a board to operate. We don't have all of the red tape to go through that an area superintendent used to have. The REAA can authorize things to happen very quickly. This I see is a very successful part of the program."

"The educational programs have a great opportunity for improvement. I think there is a lot of innovation, a lot of experimentation, that can take place now that probably couldn't under the state system. I think we can tailor our particular district's efforts towards the local needs of that district rather than looking at it from statewide perspective. We can really have an opportunity to build in some quality, try some different things. If it doesn't work we can easily get rid of it and try something else."

Political Pressures

"I think that there is less susceptibility in the political arena. It used to be that a citizen could get ahold of a legislator and change things immediately. This susceptibility has been reduced considerably. I think the local boards feel a pride in being able to run their own affairs and stand up against political pressures."

Overall Success

"I think overall it was a hell of a successful year. We're very pleased with local control, although there were some problems in terms of the logistics of setting up the districts. We've got a good situation, but I will never at any time mention it too publicly, particularly in Juneau because it is advantageous not to do so."

"In summary, as far as we the superintendents on the panel are concerned, it sounds to me that we are all happy with local control. We feel that the legislation was good. We feel like we have better operations and are doing a better job with kids than we were prior to the passage of the legislation."

PERSPECTIVES ON PROGRESS

In January, 1974, CNER issued a policy analysis study on delivery of pre-higher educational services in the unorganized borough to the Alaska Legislature.[1] At that time, the education of children in the unorganized borough and on military bases was controlled by a centralized administration in Anchorage (ASOSS), functioning independently of the State Department of Education and with policy decisions made by a board appointed by the Governor. As planning began for the follow-up study to the 1974 report, I was struck by one overwhelming thought--how much has changed in only four years!

That this perspective not be lost in the myriad of detailed issues discussed in the body of this report, letters were sent to a small group of people who have been involved in key roles in the changing rural education scene. The letter requested the recipients to send "their personal viewpoints on the emergence of the new school districts, the process by which they were created, how they are functioning, and an outlook for the future." The statements, in italics are taken from the responses.[2]

The Process Which Led to the Establishment of the REAAs

> "SB35 was a perfect example of how things should work. It melded the University of Alaska, citizens, and legislators into a group which worked with amazing rapidity. First, the attendance at the meetings of the CNER advisory board was good, the matters considered were germane and to the point, and the timing of the legislation was perfect. The results were some very hard decisions, and particularly decisions about the implementation of the bill. There was actual legislation written, a first, and some preparation in the hearing process of the legislature. There was a good lobbying effort by very diverse interests, and the integrity of the bill was protected throughout its short life, between concept and actual passage of a bill. I was and am impressed by the process which created SB35; it ought to work again, if we could pick a project which is both necessary and political."

Overall Success of the 21 New Districts

> "The transition from the Alaska Unorganized Borough School District system of education in the unorganized borough to the Regional Educational Attendance Areas has occurred with little difficulty. Regional control of pre-higher education in the unorganized borough is now a reality."

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[1] Darnell, Frank, Hecht, Kathryn A., and Orvik, James M. Prehigher Education in Unorganized Borough: Analysis and Recommendations. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska, Center for Northern Educational Research, 1974.

[2] Twenty-five letters were sent out in April, 1977. A follow-up letter was also sent. The quotes included here were based upon seven responses received by November 1, 1977.

"The passage of SB35 was a good piece of legislation, long overdue, which provides a political structure for the school boards to operate, and for some of the very remote areas, a political structure to cover issues in local government."

"The past year finds the 21 school districts functioning, for the most part, very successfully. The immense task of starting 21 new districts with untrained boards, administrators and staff has gone as smoothly as can possibly be expected for its initial stages."

"The issue was often reduced to a single argument, 'are they prepared for assuming local control?'...The assumption of local control was something that was easy for the new school boards, and they grasped it with authority and with an ability that was amazing....It is my opinion that they are functioning well, I am not always in agreement with all 21 priorities, but that also is an indication of their ability to think and function well."

"There was a staggering amount of work required to accomplish the transition from state control to regional control over educational services. With minor exceptions, the REAAs seem to be highly successful in providing needed educational services to children residing outside municipal school districts."

"In conclusion, I would like to say that I am extremely enthusiastic about the first year of implementation of SB35, and it is my belief that it has been a success...for all practical purposes there is a single financing system for the state schools for the first time in history. The state is also moving closer to a single school system as more and more BIA schools come under the control of the new districts."

Issues Identified

"In the area of staffing, some problems have come to light due to the lack of untrained administrators in Alaska, as well as sufficient secondary teachers for the small schools who can cover a broad curriculum area."

"There is some confusion over whether existing constitutional and statutory provisions were carefully adhered to in the drafting of SB35. One final confusing aspect, is the exact type of school districts created. Certainly, the REAAs are not municipal school districts, but then, are they service areas of the unorganized boroughs, or some other entity?"

"One of the areas that is still causing the districts a tremendous amount of problems is the financing of maintenance and utilities. As everyone knows, the State Operated School System went through a long period of little or no maintenance, so that many of the buildings are in need of extensive repairs. Many of the schools also had to assume the AVEC charges in electricity, and this particular area was not figured in the foundation formula that has been applied to the districts for the first operating year."

"The passage of SB35 also had hoped to bring about an updated agreement between the Bureau and the State of Alaska concerning 'An Overall Education Plan for Rural Alaska' formalized in 1963 and updated in State Department of Education on the 'Overall Education Plan' but no firm agreement has been reached."

"Negotiations have caused a great deal of concern, as for the first time these new districts are negotiating separately with their teachers and employees. It has been a learning experience in which the local boards have tried to establish their authority, which has created some problems that should solve themselves with time and understanding on the part of both labor and management."

"The exceptional problems (which have been well publicized) include lack of funds for Alaska Village Electrical Cooperative contracts in rural communities and a lack of state budgetary review. This lack of budgetary review may be due to no explicit statutory authority to the Department of Education."

"The Community School Committees that were created by SB35 are also an area of concern, as the duties of the CSC's have not been clearly outlined in each school. Each board is wrestling with the problem of how to make effective use of the CSC's and not delegate the authority that is statutorily theirs."

The Future of the REAAs

"As the new districts begin their second year of operation, I'm impressed by the commitment and concern they display."

"I think that the future for the 21 new school districts is good, providing we can keep the federal government and the state government out of their hair. The complete funding of educational needs in Alaska is not too far in the future. The danger lies in the fact that State government often dances to the drum of the federal government....That type of problem is where the future of the 21 new school districts will become clouded. Not by their own actions, but by a combination of state and federal regulations, which will tend to restrict their thinking into channels not of their own making."

"It is my conclusion that school systems ought to serve the society which surrounds them. This transcends simple considerations of either language or geography, and Alaska should capitalize on both the diversity of its population, and the fact that it represents such a wide variety of cultures in the delivery of its educational programs. Difference is not a problem until someone makes it so. Language is only a problem when it is not recognized. Culture without change will die, so, the matters relating to the future of how the 21 new school boards will fare relate largely to the matters of outside funding and outside influences."

"I realize that the movement for local control focused on that control as a means to improve the quality of education. But among the ends which I believe any study of the new districts should consider is not only the improved quality of education but also the death or diminishment of paternalism and racism. Personally, I see that change contributing substantially to a better life for kids."