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Board of Regents, Alaska State School Board, 1/8/70, 9:30 am - 12:00 noon

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Dr. Soboleff greets the chairman, Dr. Wood and the board of regents before introducing the members of the State Board of Education, Frank Whedon (?), Mr. Stranahan(?), Janet Forgen(?), Doris Wookie(?), Ed Smith, Dr. Hartman and himself.

Another man takes the floor and introduces the president of the Board of Regents, William O'Neill, Vice President McFarland, and Treasurer Dr. Hugh Fate. The secretary Mrs. Rudy(?) was help up at church and was to join later. Jim Noland was supposed to be there but his plane had been cancelled. Also introduced are Brian VonDane(?) a member of the Board of Regents of Anchorage, Mr. Robertson(?) of Ketchikan , Mrs. Bullock and Mrs. Phillips(?) of Anchorage.

Faculty participating are not introduced at this point.

A man takes the floor and expressed his pleasure at this opportunity for the Board of Regents and the Board of Education to meet together and his wish that it could happen more often. He asks if anyone has additional topics people would like to add to the list of topics to be discussed.

Discussion starts with vocational technical education in Alaska. Within the State Department of Education is the division of vocational education whose primary responsibility is secondary vocational education. He speaks about federal funding and sources of funding for vocational education. The division of vocational education does not wish to operate programs either at the secondary or post-secondary level. Instead, it wants the state to contracting with other agencies such as community colleges to operate post-secondary programs while the secondary programs would be operated by district schools. He thinks that local education boards should play a greater role in vocational programs.

Another man takes the floor, agreeing that vocational education is of the utmost importance in the state of Alaska and growing more important as the state's industrial base develops. He says the Community College Act was passed in 1953 and amended in 1960 to bridge gap between secondary education and university. The act and the amendment both make clear that the financial responsibility of adult vocational program is the responsibility of the local school district.

They speak about how federal funding had decreased or is unreliable as to when and how much funding will be available so that makes it difficult to plan a good program and enroll the students.

He agrees with the commissioner that the State Department of Education should not get itself in the role organizing and putting on the actual educational programs but rather should hold the role of advisory and developing programs and contracting with other agencies to do the instructional work. He says that though the community college under its present set up may not be ideal, he feels that relationships with local school districts, communities and universities so that the system can function better. He hopes that a third educational unit and will not be set up in the state in which there is a separate board for community colleges which would mean yet another separate body going to the legislature for funds and less articulation between the various levels of education than there presently is. He says that is the situation in the state of Washington and some other places and he hopes that the young state of Alaska can learn from this and have a more efficient set-up with fewer separate boards and fewer people going to the legislature rather than more. He then opens things up for questions. Someone thanks Dr. Buswell.

Someone asks Dr. Hartman if the State Board of Education requests funds from the legislature, particularly for vocational education. Dr. Hartman answers that, yes, they have, in the past. The President of the State Board of Education says that cuts in and asks if anyone from the news is in the room as he will make statement he doesn't want in print at this time. He wants to make predictions about what will happen after the Governor gives his State of the State message and budget message to the Legislature, but as such things are subject to such change, he requests that his remarks not become public knowledge in terms of the newspaper. He says they have usually received a very heavy cut in their requests for vocational education funds off the general fund budget. They will be asking for more state funds this year.

A man asks if there is a matching requirement in the proposal.

A man asks if it is advisable for the state board of education to supply all the funds for vocational technical training to the community colleges and to what extent should the local school boards should participate.

It is answered that not all the funds will necessarily go to community colleges, for example a small amount might be used in business and industry programs or some might be used for a native advisory board's programs, for example. He reiterates the idea that instead of the state board of education going directly to the community college director, ask that director to go to their local board of education to get the program approved so that the state board of education is able to contract with local boards of education instead of each individual community college.

Someone (his name at 33:43) says he would like to speak to that point and that it is his understanding that this should have been done all along. He says that a contract between a community college and the state department of education for the use of vocational funds should actually be a contract between the local school district and the state department of education rather than the community college, whereas a contract for academic programs is a contract with the University of Alaska not with the individual community college. He says this is a known problem that can be worked out.

It is discussed that the present system exists because it was expedient, saved a lot of red tape to work closely with the community college director and bypass the board of education or the superintendent but that it was a mistake. A man comments that there is something to be said for getting done what needs to be done, even at the expense of some of the niceties of the paperwork. He suggests that whatever arrangement is arrived at, that it not hold up action because sometimes funds, from Washington or from industry, for example, are available only for very short periods of time.

A man (Sam? 37:03) comments that it looks as if they are taking a step backward, almost to where they were at the inception of the community college program whereby the University of Alaska and the local boards worked together closely and it was embarrassing for the local board not to know exactly what is going on. People would say, "This is a wonderful program that is going on now. Is the board responsible for this?" And they say, "No, I'm sorry. It is too bad the board isn't responsible for this; it is too bad the community college has just got a part of this. It is the department of labor that is really doing it."

A man adds that they are having problems in their relationship with the Department of Labor because of federal decisions regarding manpower needs and programs for the unemployed and underemployed. It happens that frequently the senators find it expedient to go the U.S. Department of Labor get funding there. However, this puts them on the spot with Alaska's State Department of Labor who thinks there is a greater need for other programs in other areas for which the funds cannot be used.

A man comments that it might be that a lot of training and education is going on in certain skill areas that the Board of Regents, the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education aren't directly involved in.

Mrs. Phillips(?) spoke to Dr. Hartman, saying that in some of the material she received, the office of education required that all fifty states comply with the vocational amendments act of 1968 by setting up state advisory councils on vocational education and by submitting new state plans for vocational education. She asks if there is another advisory committee.

A man answers that this is another thorn in their side; in order to be eligible for federal funds a state must establish a state ad board for vocational education even though there is by statute a state board for vocational education in nearly every state. So there is conflict as to the role and responsibility of the state board versus the advisory board in the division of vocational education. Most states have taken the stance that their state statute supersedes anything congress has done in terms of giving the state board a great deal of administrative power, even though the federal guidelines are quite specific.

Another man, comments on further complications about funding. He comments on a program of the federal government, in which they would provide subsistence education for certain ethnic groups or low income families, etc. However, the subsistence funding came from a totally different source from the funds for the instruction and equipment for the training itself. The selection of students was made by one agency that funded subsistence whereas the problems of selecting the instruction, getting the equipment, finding space, and operating the program were handled by a completely different agency with a different set of funds.

Someone suggests a coffee break. People talk among themselves. Someone makes a comment, agreeing with Dr. Hartman, that joint meetings should be scheduled at least once a year. Someone asks how vocational education should be arranged in parts of the state that do not have community colleges. Someone else answers, saying that the university contracts with the State Department of Education or sometimes with the local school board to run vocational and skill programs in parts of the state where there are no community colleges. This is done primarily for a single program such as a saw-mill operator's training program to be put on in three to five rural locations.

Someone else says that requests for needed programs come in through various channels in various ways: Native organizations, a superintendent, the Department of Labor, the ESC office, etc. He goes on to complain that for certain funds the need for a certain program must be approved before the program can be offered.

Another man (Dr. Laferty?) speaks of the problem of funding vocational education. He believes there isn't a local school board in the state that will put local funds into an adult vocational education program over K-12 program. Many of the problems relating to vocational education are wider than the district itself. Also, the job for which people need to be trained might not be locally oriented at all. However, local boards of education are not likely to fund programs of these sorts. Another example is a situation in which the State Department of Vocational Education contracted for some instruction in clerk and bookkeeper work in Bethel. Fifteen students entered the course and fourteen graduated and were employed. The instructors for the course happened to be an unemployed couple who were temporarily available to go to Bethel and instruct for the duration of the course. There was a recent request for a similar type of program. But no available instructors in Alaska could be located that were willing to relocate and instruct for a course of such short duration. Because an instructor could not be found, the money was shifted to a program in a larger community, Juneau. This means there are people in the smaller community who are unemployed and want jobs and who could be trained but now lack the opportunity. The speaker stresses that there is no reason to feel that a person who needs adult vocational training as a clerk or a computer operator or a carpenter has any less right to support and provisions than someone who wants vocational training as a doctor, a teacher or an engineer.

Another man acknowledges the previous speaker's point, commenting on how vocational education will only become more important in Alaska as the state continues to industrialize. He also says he feels that an annual joint meeting is necessary to coordinate on this issue that will continue to grow in importance. He says that if it is not clear who is responsible for a program, as often happens with vocational education, that program will not receive the needed funding. He speaks of hopes that the Legislature will see to it that vocational education receives more funding.

Another man thinks it is important to come out with a strong policy statement for the Legislature to make it clear what needs to be done and a proposal of how it should be done.

Another man starts speaking about the Department of Labor and the tape ends.