

For Secondary Education—

RurAL CAP Seeks Educ. Opportunity

With the focus of attention on the status of secondary education in rural Alaska recently, RurAL CAP established its position that the State should honor its statutes that an equal opportunity would be provided for that education to Native as well as non-Native students.

Mike Harper, Director of the community action program, stated that the agency endorsed efforts of individuals seeking some equitable resolution to different areas such as the boarding home — dormitory programs.

In this interest, a panel discussion was held during the recent Board of Directors' meeting, with Ed Anders, Special Assistant from the Governor's office; Marshall Lind, Commissioner, State Department of Education; and Eva Kriger, Bureau of Indian Affairs, present.

Baxter Wood from the Alaska State-Operated Schools sits on the RurAL CAP Board and was also present.

Richard Whittaker from Ketchikan moderated the panel in their two-hour discussion which delineated responsibilities of the school systems in the state.

Commissioner Lind stated that there were three different school systems in the State, and that they are not equal. There is the federal system, the Bureau of Indian Affairs; Alaska State-Operated Schools, and also the independent borough or city school districts.

The State Department of Education has two major responsibilities, one being the regulatory to see that laws are implemented; and the leadership function with a responsibility to continuously seek better approaches to education.

Mrs. Kriger, Education Specialist from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, pointed out that they operate 53 schools, and for the first time have a pre-school program, located in Kotzebue. They also have adult education programs.

She commented that the pending Molly Hootch case will resolve which institution, federal or state, has responsibility for secondary education in the rural areas. Alaska Legal Services filed the case on behalf of Molly Hootch.

Baxter Wood from the Alaska State-Operated Schools staff represented Stanley Frieze, Superintendent, who was unable to attend the meeting. He discussed briefly the SOS attempt to decentralize their operation and also reported on the Native regional education needs assessment studies that were done in 1971-72.

Mr. Anders commented that he was there to listen and report to Governor Egan who has a deep interest in education.

Director of the CAP, Mike Harper, said he believed the discussion pointed up the need for a total education experience in rural communities a more closely coordinated effort with the

State Department of Education and Bureau of Indian Affairs, and also the need for education of the rural communities and their responsibilities as they assume local control of their school districts.