

# High School Plan Meets Opposition

Hooper Bay, Alaska 99604

Dear Fellow Alaskan:

This is to share with you our thoughts in the hope that you will like them and join with us in striving to get Regional High Schools with boarding facilities scattered throughout Alaska.

During the recent campaign Gov. Hickel let it be known that he favored smaller regional high schools located in villages where a minimum pupil enrollment of 250 could be expected. Boarding facilities would be provided, so that pupils from surrounding villages could be enrolled. One plan showed proposed high schools in Barrow, Nome, Kotzebue, St. Lawrence Island, Unalakleet, Huslia, Tanana, Ft. Yukon, Fairbanks, Nenana, St. Mary's, Hooper Bay, Kalskag, Kodiak, Dillingham, Levelock Valdez, and southern communities.

The advantage of this system would be that, according to Tundra Times, (12-16-66) between 25 per cent and 90 per cent of the students might be able to live at home, depending on the size of the village where the regional school was located.

"The advantage of such small schools," the Tundra Times continues, "is the fact a student gets to attend near home, in a cultural environment he is familiar with."

Unfortunately, a special study conducted of the regional high school program for the State of Alaska has recommended in favor of a system of integrated urban based regional high schools to serve youths from Alaska's many native villages, the only rural high school to be located at Bethel, serving the highly populated Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta areas. The principal locations of these integrated urban regional high schools would be Fairbanks and Anchorage, with possible locations at Kodiak, Sitka, Juneau, and Ketchikan.

We do not like the recommended regional high school system, which would locate high schools in the larger urban areas only, with the sole exception of Bethel, for the following reasons:

1) It would accelerate urban development at the coast of proportionate development of the outlying area. This we believe is economically and politically unsound. A thriving outlying area will provide business for a thriving urban area; weaken the outlying area and you cut the roots of urban prosperity and full State development. The report seems to realize that the Urban Regional High School Plan would weaken the outlying area when it warns that urban based regional high schools would not necessarily contribute in the near future to the social and economic development of the villages. It points out that the urban oriented school might hasten disintegration of certain villages by enhancing opportunities for young people elsewhere.

2) This leads us to the second reason why we are opposed to the proposed plan IT WOULD UPROOT OUR PEOPLE. It would bring our tender grammar school graduates out of their native atmosphere, introduce and steep them in another culture and leave too great a percentage of them victim of alcohol in skid row and in the city slums. This is too high a price to pay in human assets. Removing the young from the villages and training them elsewhere in such a way that they are alienated from their own people will rob them of their identity, make them ashamed of their people, when they should be justly proud of them, and create more problems than it will solve, such as drinking, moral delinquency, child neglect, crime because even with their schools, deprived of their identity as they would be, they would be culturally and educationally unfit to compete. Our native people cannot be brought into the mainstream of modern American life by cutting off the roots of their past. High schools in urban areas only will effect a break in their development.

High Schools in the larger native towns will keep continuity with the past while hastening a blend with the new culture and the local economic development as well. Besides, high schools in local areas would be effective in raising the adult level in education. Adults would be less likely to object to being taught in a grade school by grade school teachers.

3) As stated above one fourth to nine tenths of the high school students could live at home if schools were located in the larger outlying towns, and the rest would be in a local familiar atmosphere, where they could develop their identity and personality uniting the desirable features of the new culture with the best of the old. Our children are not like reindeer that can be driven here and there without damage and our parents would like their children home or at least within easy visiting distance.

4) High schools in the larger villages would foster the growth and development of these areas, which would have many wholesale secondary effects. For example, a high school at Hooper Bay with boarding facilities would give employment to about 20 or more people, cook, laundry, janitors, etc., would increase mail volume, freight volume, business in the stores might bring in Alaska Steamship Co., improve the quality of our homes, and raise the adult level of know how and education. A high school at Hooper Bay with boarding facilities would make the difference between a small town and a city.

Our native people are making great strides in uniting the new culture with the old. High schools in these areas would hasten the process without uprooting the people and demoralizing many.

This makes us believe that whatever the extra cost in dol-

(continued on Page 6)

# Meets Opposition . . .

(Continued from Page 2)

lars the money would be well spent. The younger generations personal development, its spiritual and civic integrity would be more valued than dollars. These human resources are of supreme value. It is these that will contribute most to the building of a happy, industrious people and a great country.

For these reasons we plan to write our senator and representative in Juneau. For the same reasons we are also writing you for we fear that our voices alone will not be enough to prevail over the recommendations of specialists, who it seems understand dollars better than human values. What we think is needed is a united effort of all of the smaller towns and villages, insisting on a system of high schools with boarding facilities where our younger generation can be trained to enter the mainstream of modern American life without cutting their roots with our past. This, we think, Gov. Hickel understands. We must make sure that our senators and representatives understand it also.

Won't you please study this question, and if you think as we do write to your senators and representatives so that we may avoid the catastrophe of Integrated Urban Regional High Schools. The more support that you can get from other villages in your area the better. Let's take no chances in this serious matter and go all out that human values be not destroyed for the sake of a few dollars. The sooner action is taken the better and before this legislature adjourns.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph Olson, President  
Nile Smith, Vice President  
Roy Joseph, Secretary  
Pius Hoelscher, Councilman  
Peter Black, Councilman  
Julius Green, Councilman  
Aaron Rivers, Councilman