

# Northwest Arctic District Position Reversed

By STAN JONES

The Northwest Arctic School District has come out against proposed regulations on community involvement in program planning and evaluation for village schools, after stating earlier that it would not oppose them.

The opposition came at a public teleconference hearing held (May 13) in Kotzebue and several other locations across the state. Administrative assistant Marty Zelonky testified on behalf of the district, citing the difficulties of organizing a well-rounded school program under adverse conditions.

"But," he stated, "the...belief that children raised at home and

educated in a locally controlled system" are better off than in "the loneliness, desolation, and frustration encountered in schools far removed from the familiarity of home and culture...has inspired community members, Advisory School Board members, and Regional Board members to overcome these burdens."

Stating that existing regulations already mandate community involvement in program planning and evaluation, Zelonky continued, "Because the Department of Education has admitted to being remiss in the enforcement of the existing regulations, we fail to understand the logic that would institute new regulations which expand and further detail an equivalent regulation."

"Though the new regulations will require the burden of paper work that merely will demonstrate to individuals who are far removed from local issues that we exceed existing and potential regulations requirements we look forward to the opportunity to demonstrate our compliance. We work together in the NANA region and share the burden of responsibility," Zelonky concluded.

The district's statement that it would not oppose the community involvement regulations came last month (see TT, April 30, 1980) shortly after it filed a motion to intervene in the "Molly Hootch" case because of the same proposals.

At that time Zelonky said of the proposals, "We will not oppose them before the regulatory body and we will not necessarily oppose these specific regulations in court...our motion to intervene is simply an insurance that we will have a say in any possible settlement which might arise from the litigation."

Zelonky said that the district had changed its mind about opposing the regulations "because of certain events and tactics that have transpired since the motion was initially filed."

Zelonky referred to a letter circulated by Alaska Legal Services Corporation which urged village residents to comment on the proposed regulations. In the letter, Legal Services also promised to monitor comments made by the

various REAA's on the regulations and continued, "If we see comments from your school District which do not support the regulations, we will send them to you so that you will know what your school district is saying."

According to Zelonky, the district felt that the Legal Services letter threatened the process of comment upon the regulations. "The threat of reprisal upon persons who make critical testimony of these proposed regulations may deter upon comment. This attitude defeats the purpose of the promulgation process and in fact denies the State Board of Education an unbiased perspective necessary to make a proper decision," Zelonky testified.