

Rural Affairs Labor Task Force Meets in Anchorage

The newly appointed Rural Affairs Commission Labor Task Force met in Anchorage last Tuesday.

Governor Walter J. Hickel appointed a ten-man Rural Affairs Commission Labor Task Force recently and the group met for the first time in Anchorage.

After listening to 12 speakers from state and federal agencies and representatives from labor, the group sat down to draw up a statement of purpose and recommendations to alleviate rural area unemployment.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The statement of purpose: "The committee is created to advise the Governor of unemployment and underemployment in the rural areas and to recommend measures for the elimination of these problems and for the attainment of full employment in Alaska."

REASONS

FOR

UNEMPLOYMENT IN RURAL ALASKA

1. Lack of local economics.
2. Importation of outside labor and selective hiring practices by contractors where jobs are available.
3. Inadequate experience and educational qualifications of local labor forces.
4. Lack of assistance in securing jobs for local labor forces. Many rural citizens fail to get jobs because of misunderstanding and unfamiliarity of hiring procedures and red tape.
5. Hiring through central agency registers or dispatching centers which are long distances from rural villages.
6. Inadequate advertising of available jobs.
7. Lack of agency and industry coordination in determining work force needs and meeting those needs through communication and education.
8. Individual seasonal commitments of rural citizens.
9. Inconsistent local hiring (sporadic hiring to fill immediate needs without guarantees on jobs utilizing full-time outside labor).
10. Community program restrictions limiting eligibility where there are over 2,000 people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That there be continued efforts in rural area development.
 - a. Local economic potentials should be evaluated.
 - b. Where feasible, every assistance should be given to develop the local economy.

The right clothing (warm but light) can help the snow shoveler. But some men wear too much, your Alaska Heart Association says, while others court chills by underdressing.

Snow shoveling is strenuous exercise, your Alaska Heart Association notes, and even reasonably healthy men should do it unhurriedly and avoid overexertion.

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2. That the labor department acquire or maintain labor availability lists for each community and encourage contractors to utilize local people.

3. That a member of the Governor's office be placed on camps and authority be vested in camps as the coordinating agency for vocational and educational training in Alaska.

4. That the labor department be sufficiently funded to expand operation "Out Reach."

5.a. That the personnel rules should be simplified to allow provisional hiring on an O.J.T. basis without regard to educational or experience qualifications and allowance be made for greater flexibility in local hire.

5.b. That contractors and union dispatching centers be urged to utilize local (community) hiring personnel.

6. That the employment service of the labor department be adequately funded to advertise all available jobs.

7. That the Associated General Contractors be requested to cooperate with State and Federal agencies in determining labor needs

and attempting to fill those needs on local levels.

8. That where practical contracts be let to correspond with seasonal availability of local work forces.

9. That equal opportunity laws be enforced and policies established and enforced among all stated agencies.

10. That community size limitations for eligibility in various community programs be raised from 2,000 to 5,000 population.

The following men were appointed by Governor Hickel to the Labor Task Force; Rep. Bill Hensley, Kotzebue; Rep. Carl Moses, Unalaska; Harry Carter, Kodiak, who was elected chairman of the Labor Task Force; Jerry Crow, Barrow; Richard Frank, Minto and Fairbanks; Jeff David, Haines; George Attla, Huslia; Howard Rock, Point Hope and Fairbanks; Harvey Samuelson, Dillingham; and Jerome Trigg, Nome.

Howard Rock was unable to attend due to heavy workload but Phil Kelly, student at the University of Alaska from Egigik, was named to replace him at the meeting.

The Task Force is planning to meet before the next legislature convenes.