

Dr. Van der Velden Proposes Novel Social Services Plan for Alaska

“Most of the social service agencies work on their own,” said Dr. Henry Van der Velden at the recent confer-

ence of the Alaska Federation of Native Associations.

“There is little cooperation.

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Social Services Plan . . .

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In order to do a good job, we should involve more Native people in the social services."

In order to do this he has proposed a new program for undergraduate social service education at the University of Alaska. This program would be geared to meet the needs of native students interested in some aspect of social service in Alaskan villages.

Dr. Van der Velden is an Associate Professor at the University of Alaska in the department of psychology and sociology. He designed the curriculum after an extensive study of the problems facing social welfare services in the state of Alaska.

According to his report 95% of our native students at the University of Alaska fail by the close of their freshman year, while at Ford Louis College in Colorado these students do very well.

Since more students have graduated from Ford Louis in the past ten years than from the University of Alaska in its entire history, he places the blame on the present curriculum of the University of Alaska saying that it does not meet the needs of Native people.

Dr. Van der Velden, assisted by Miss Zaye Chapin, an Assistant Professor at the university, outlined the following two undergraduate programs for social services education.

One program would consist of an interdepartmental major and minor with concentration in the social services courses offered and include both classroom teaching and field-instruction.

The second program would be a special project for undergraduate social service education involving in particular Indians and Eskimos. This would function on four levels.

1. The student would go to the University for the first year taking a light course load including one introductory course in the social services.

Two months of field observation and practice would follow at the completion of which he would be granted a certificate bearing the title Social Service Aide. He would then be given full employment in a social agency of his choice, paid accordingly, and given some college credits for the work.

2. After one year he would be able to return to the University for a second year of study and field work and given the title Social Service Assistant. A second year of full employment in a village would follow on a higher salary schedule.

3. After this year of ser-

vice he could return to the University to complete his junior and senior years with studies in the social services. Upon graduation he would receive his B.A. plus the title Social Service Associate.

4. After one or two years of satisfactory employment he might return to the university for the fourth level of work on a higher degree.

All through the program tutorial assistance and financial aide in the form of field employment would be offered.

Dr. Van der Velden is pushing for this program to begin in the fall of 1967 although there has been no official comment made by the University.

A questionnaire, formulated by the Council on Social Work Education, was sent to several prominent and professional persons concerned with the problem of personnel in the social services.

This questionnaire asked whether or not a school of social work leading to the degree Master of Social Welfare could be established in Alaska, and if so in which city.

The replies returned to date indicate that the demand for MSW's is not that great at the present time, but if such a school were to be established in the next few years it should be located in Anchorage.

It has generally been accepted that for many positions in the Social Services an MSW degree is not necessary, and many jobs could be carried out by persons having different varieties of training. Some of these could be advanced degrees, others less than bachelors. Dr. Van der Velden's proposed educational program would provide several levels of trained Social Service Workers.

Another problem he pointed out lies in recognizing what job areas exist and how these should be differentiated and specifically trained for.

The Alaska State Council on Social Service Education has proposed to Governor Hickel that a Governor's committee for Social Service Education be established.

His committee would consist of representatives from the Governor's office, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Divisions of Public Welfare, Youth and Adult Authority, Mental Health, and Public Health, Universities and Colleges, BIA, ASCAP, Alaska Federation of Native Associations, and other similar agencies.

The committee would function to coordinate funding for maximum utilization.