

Marshall Lind Quoted Answering a Question on the State's Role in Education. From a Summer Class He Taught, 1984

That's been an issue that's been going around since before statehood. What is it that we want, what is it that we think we want in the way of an educational program? And I'm willing to state right now that that issue will never be satisfactorily answered as a state policy. I don't think that it can be, and quite frankly, I don't think it should be. I don't think that you can first of all say, here is what should happen to the Alaskan Native population. What is the Alaskan Native population? What are people talking about; there are differences. I think that the policy for the state is: take those indicators that make up a program, ensure that there is a program described in the broadest and general sense, that there is a staff to implement that program, that there is finances to make things happen, that there are facilities—that's the state's responsibility—to put that together. The program determination is going to have to be made by those directly involved. The parents and the citizens of the various communities should decide what they want. Now, I may be totally out in left field on that, but I don't think it's ever going to be answered at the state level. I don't think it can be nor do I think that is the appropriate level for that sort of thing. I think the state's responsibility is to put the components out there so a program can happen; the characteristics of that program are going to have to be determined on a regional and local basis .

...Hours and hours were spent trying to wrestle with that in the early seventies at the time of the Molly Hootch case and even before that in the early sixties. The state was trying to decide; "What is it that we really want?" The state always seemed to sidestep the specifics and I think that it's good that they sidestepped it and that philosophy prevailed. I'm willing to bet you that's going to continue; the state's not going to answer that.

As you watch the sensitivity of dealing with the other related questions, bilingual, multicultural education, you'll know exactly what I mean. There's a large amount of money for not-a-well-defined program at the state level. That doesn't mean there aren't some good programs, but the definitions have to come about locally. There are also some that aren't good programs; their window dressing; they're not doing very much. I think that's the price you pay for that kind of latitude to exist at the local level.

I don't know what people are talking about when they say, "the Native population." I've seen enough situations around the state to be very uncomfortable trying to design a program to fit this category of our population.

That's my feeling and that's been my feeling all along.

