

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

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Gilbert A. Schulkind
White House Task Force on Education

INTERVIEW WITH MARLIN MACLAUGHLIN

Mr. Jasper and I interviewed Mr. MacLaughlin (on May 12, 1965) in his two capacities: first, as Acting Commissioner's Regional Representative, and, secondly, as Regional Representative for the School Assistance to Federally Affected Areas Program.

COMMENT ON ROLE AS COMMISSIONER'S REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE:

Functions:

Mr. MacLaughlin indicated that he does not normally make decisions but provides information or answers to questions asked. This information is usually in response to requests received from members of the public, higher education institutions, local educational people, and sometimes from State school officers. These come in by correspondence and telephone, and occasionally by personal visit. His function is to answer the questions, if they are available, or to refer to the proper sources for answering. He also hands out materials. If inquiries are received in programs other than the SAFA program, he does not handle them, but refers them to the appropriate representative. In their absence, he will attempt to answer questions if he has information or he may go to Washington for the answer.

Mr. MacLaughlin indicated that he has only held this position on an acting basis and has never been assigned the full responsibility of a Commissioner's Representative. He does not know what other Commissioner's Representatives do. However, the workload has grown to the extent that he has trouble keeping up with his SAFA responsibilities. He also makes frequent talks at the request of various institutions.

He does not make assignments to the other people in the Regional Office except on a very minimal basis. He does not review the work of the other representatives and his sole function is to sign for leave and approve travel vouchers, etc.

Mr. MacLaughlin indicated that Dr. Offner also did not attempt to get into substantive programs when he was the Commissioner's Representative in New York. However, he feels free to ask the representatives for program information to get answers to inquiries

and he also feels that he has the authority to talk with the program representatives if he feels they are not doing their job well. However, correspondence on their subject matter does not cross his desk.

Problems and Recommendations:

Mr. MacLaughlin felt that his main problem is that the information work was a significant burden in addition to his regular assignment. He doesn't feel in a position to recommend additional decentralization to the field or that more authority be given to the Commissioner's Representative to supervise program people. However, he does believe that higher education facilities should have a field man in New York.

COMMENT ON ROLE AS SAFA REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE:

Functions:

Mr. MacLaughlin is responsible for the SAFA program in four states. He has three men reporting to him and he reviews all their work.

The SAFA program requires applications from local educational districts which are received in the regional office to be checked by the staff. If these are acceptable, the representatives then visit the school district and conduct an audit of attendance by pupils who meet the conditions for Federal aid. If acceptable, they make a report to Washington on which payment is based. The bulk of the work in this area consists of the review of applications and checking of attendance records in the school districts.

He also is responsible for review of proposals for construction under P.L. 815. Applications for construction are submitted through the State agency. They are reviewed in the regional office for academic acceptability and approval of the equipment proposed. If this is acceptable, it is referred to Washington and then sent to Housing and Home Finance Agency (Community Facilities Administration) to review for the engineering and architectural acceptability. After approval, the money is allotted in accordance with the progress of construction. Mr. MacLaughlin stated that determinations on acceptability are generally adopted in Washington without change. There is also continuing contact with the CPA people in the field on individual projects.

Problems and Recommendations:

Mr. MacLaughlin feels that he gets very good information from Headquarters on his own program area and does not feel that he could

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do much more or exercise greater authority in the SAFA area. He did express the belief that it might be well to combine SAFA with the grant-in-aid approach under Title I of P.L. 89-10, because of their similarity. He felt that there must be closer liaison with the State and local community than would be possible if Title I programs were administered entirely from Washington.

cc: Mr. Ink
Mr. Jasper
Mr. Oganovic

GASchulkind/tvf