

County School Superintendent's Office To Face Problems, Mekvold Says in Brief

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A study of the intermediate unit or county school superintendent's office shows a number of problems made it difficult to operate in the past, and some serious problems are expected in the future, according to a brief compiled by Alf B. Mekvold, county school superintendent and chairman of the legislative committee of the Oregon Association of County School Superintendents.

One of the chief problems in the past has been its piecemeal growth, according to Mekvold's brief.

When founded, the county office was largely for the scattered one-room schools and a simple program. The county superintendent was an elective office requiring minimum qualifications.

The original law which authorized the county school superintendent's office gave the superintendent's duties as:

Visit Schools in County

"Visit the schools taught in his county at least once a year. Seek to aid, instruct and inspire teachers to employ the best methods in teaching, governing and conducting their schools. Procure the proper classification of pupils, enforce the course of study prescribed by law and the care and protection of school property.

"Study to awaken among parents and children a deeper interest in the public schools, to secure improved attendance, deportment and scholarship and more frequent visits of parents and school directors. Carefully observe the condition of schoolhouses and surroundings. Note all defects and notify the board of directors of same. Hear, examine and decide appeals from district officers, and teachers, without cost to the appellates and subject to an appeal to the superintendent of public instruction.

"Advise and consult with the district school boards relative to the construction, warming, ventilation and arrangement of schoolhouses, the im-



RECEIVE CHECK - A check representing funds collected in the Medford Moose lodge's Christmas tree pick-up is turned over to Mrs. B. Brandt Bartels, second from right, and Mrs. Edward Collins from the Junior Service League's kindergarten for hard of hearing children. Presenting the check is Bob Trimble, chairman of the tree project, while watching is Billy Dean, prelate and acting governor. (Knackstedt Photo)

proving and adorning of school grounds, methods of instruction and discipline in the school and condition of the schoolhouse, sites and out-buildings and appendages of the district generally."

More duties were added later. These included member of the county school district board, member of the county board of health, secretary to the non-high board, county testing program, consolidation and election proceedings, enforcement of compulsory attendance law, recommendations for emergency teaching certificates, apportionment of funds, the county institute and in-service programs, some work in the area of the standardization program, curriculum study groups, distribution of materials and forms and others.

New Law Provisions
When the rural school law was passed in 1947 it was not aimed at reorganizing or improving. The county school superintendent would be hired indirectly as secretary to the rural school district board, according to the new law's provisions. Since the rural board now had budget review powers, the county school superintendent's position became more important, Mekvold's brief noted.

The rural school law of 1957 provided for the superintendent's appointment and established his qualifications.

The law also stated that the rural district would cover the county, which made the rural board a county board.

"Not given too much legal status, compensation or adequate personnel, many superintendents did a commendable and professional job," Mekvold wrote.

Four Kinds of Offices

There are now four kinds of county superintendents in Oregon's 36 counties, Mekvold noted. They are: (1) five county units, where the county district superintendent is a qualified administrator appointed by the county unit board; (2) four counties which

are all in the rural district operating under provisions of the old rural school law and where the superintendent is appointed by the board; (3) Morrow county, now an administrative district under the reorganization law, although operating as a county unit; and (4) all others, about 20, changing from elective to appointive offices as terms expire or the incumbent superintendent leaves.

Differences in Oregon's topography and population patterns cause another problem. A flexible pattern is needed for the intermediate unit to meet different situations, Mekvold pointed out.

Bills Introduced
Two bills were introduced during the last legislative session. One would have weakened the position of the county office and the other would have more clearly defined its function and those of the rural board. Both bills failed. Legislative act cannot change the picture before the 1961-62 school year and maybe not even the next year, Mekvold pointed out.

Machinery Firm to Get Portland Branch
Cal-Ore Machinery company, Medford, recently announced plans to establish a new branch in Portland. The company distributes mill and logging equipment and contractors' machinery.

The new branch will be located in a building to be constructed by F. Baker, Vancouver, who recently purchased the site. Land and building will represent an investment of about \$75,000, according to Baker. The building will include offices, parts storage and a repair shop.

What will determine what the county office can or will be doing, however, is more apt to be how professionally competent the office is, willingness of the taxpayers to approve the necessary budgets and what services are needed.

The county school office is

an intermediate unit between local school districts and the state department of education in most states. Exceptions are 12 county-unit states and Delaware and Nevada which have no intermediate district and New York and the New England states where the intermediate unit consists of several towns.

Among those having county boards of education are Arkansas, California, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin.

Establishes Districts

New York changed its laws to establish 65 intermediate districts in place of 181 supervisory districts. In 16 of the 65 intermediate areas, proposed boundaries corresponded roughly with those of the county.

An Illinois study revealed that some type of intermediate administrative unit is needed to provide specialized services and leadership, and that the intermediate unit has a unique function of leadership to perform even after school district reorganization. The study was conducted after the Illinois local districts had been reorganized, Mekvold noted.

A poll of Illinois school superintendents revealed they thought some sort of intermediate administrative unit is needed and the county is not necessarily the best area to provide such a unit, he wrote. They said in some cases it is too small and in others it does not conform to the appropriate area to be served by such a unit.

Believe in Services

Washington superintendents generally believe an intermediate unit's services are needed. More of the larger school districts thought so than the smaller ones.

An Indiana study concluded preferred size of intermediate units would be to cover from 4,000 to 5,000 pupils in five to seven districts. Local school administrative units could be provided better and more economically at the intermediate level.

The New Jersey county superintendent is more of an arm of the state department of public instruction according to method of appointment and source of money, Mekvold's brief noted. New Jersey is noted as one of the first states to provide a well-organized, carefully planned and adequately staffed program of county office supervision.

Current Problems
Among current problems are those brought by the present operations of the rural school district as revised in 1957. These include inequitable distribution of the rural school district funds, conflicts

with the basic school support law, regarding the school district reorganization and having no legal status spelled out for services from the rural school district.

"It has been pointed out further that the present provision of the rural school law which makes the budget of the county office and the county rural board the first charge against any tax receipts is not proper," Mekvold wrote. "This provision was written into the first rural school law in 1947 and was not changed in the revisions made in 1957."

"The budget of the county office and the rural school board should be subject to the same budgetary limitations as the budgets of any other taxing unit," Mekvold stated.

Based on Average

Apportionment of funds in counties operating under the revised 1957 law now is based on estimated average daily attendance. Figures in some counties show this is not the best basis of distribution, Mekvold pointed out.

Some people feel that the county equalized levy under rural school law has conflicted with the basic school support law ever since enactment of both laws. A local district may receive state funds under the equalization provisions of the state basic fund law. However, the same district may be a comparatively wealthier district within a county and in turn would contribute to county equalization.

General Provisions

The 1957 rural school law, as originally written, provided that the county should be considered as a unit in apportionment of school funds. If the county were considered as a unit when receiving state

funds there would be no conflict, Mekvold pointed out.

The 1957 revisions of the rural school law made only general provisions on the legal status of a rural school district. The legal status and functions of the rural school district office or the county school superintendent's office should be spelled out more definitely, Mekvold suggested.

Should the county rural board be discontinued the county superintendent, appointed by the board, and other county staff members could not be appointed. No

provisions would be included in a county program of services, Mekvold said.

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LOANS AND DISCOUNTS	\$1,867,355.19
Less Reserve for Losses	18,649.49
United States Bonds	2,730,007.19
Municipal Bonds and Warrants	337,402.41
Banking House, Fixtures and Equipment	99,386.02
Cash and Due From Banks	989,529.23
Stock in Federal Reserve Bank	7,800.00
TOTAL	\$6,012,830.55
LIABILITIES	
Capital Stock	\$ 150,000.00
Surplus	110,000.00
Undivided Profits	32,517.47
DEPOSITS	5,682,808.19
Interest Collected, Not Earned	37,504.89
TOTAL	\$6,012,830.55

(INCLUDING BRANCH OFFICE AT 701 EAST JACKSON BLVD.)

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Raymond E. Rieger, Assistant Cashier
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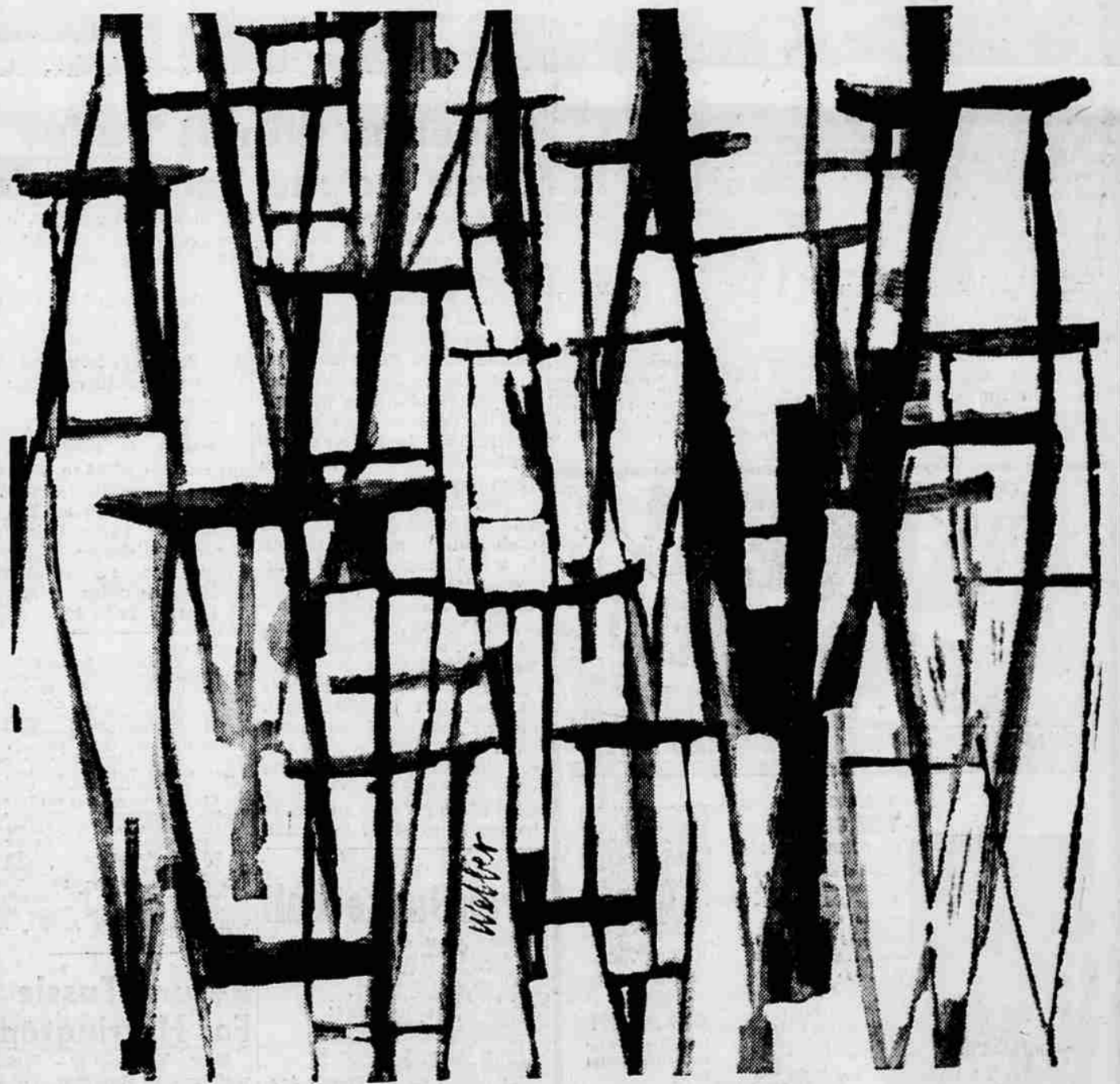
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One shot doesn't give maximum polio protection. Three injections are needed. Have you and your children had the full course?

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