

NHCC United Faculty

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NHCC Union Leaders Meet with Governor

by Alan Hall

Five NHCC/UF members recently attended "Higher Education - 2000" hosted by Texas United Faculty on Tuesday, January 7, 1986. This symposium focused on issues facing higher education in the next century. TUF has been working with the newly appointed Select Committee on Higher Education, a committee which promises to have a great influence in our professional lives. The symposium focused on various issues concerning the SCOHE and included workshops on teacher training, open vs. limited access, and the future of tenure, as well as a luncheon address from Dr. Frank Newman, President, Education Commission of the States. However, the highlight of the day was a panel discussion on these and other issues. The panelists were Governor White, Lt. Governor Hobby, Rep. Delco, who is the chair of the Higher Education Committee and spoke at NHCC's in-service for Fall, 1985, and Kenneth Ashworth, Commissioner for Higher Education at the Coordinating Board.

The panel offered a wide-ranging discussion of issues and problems. The following highlights from each panelist were of particular interest.

Rep. Delco

All of the panelists agreed with Rep. Delco that a crucial element in facing future higher education needs is adequate funding. Delco suggested that a tax increase may be necessary if Texas is to achieve the excellence it seeks in higher education. She also expressed concern over access to higher education and minority enrollment.

Lt. Governor Hobby

Lt. Governor Hobby, in response to a question about the role of the community college, noted that he feels that "the community college is the most responsive part of the educational system because it serves the needs of individual areas."

Kenneth Ashworth

Mr. Ashworth agrees with Rep. Delco's money worries and is especially concerned about faculty salaries. He predicts for 2000 a slowing of enrollment (only 67,000 students will be added to the higher education system), but the smaller enrollment will include a significant increase in minorities. Citing remarkable technological changes to come, Ashworth emphasized the importance of liberal arts: "Analysis, search, and reason are important in a high tech world."

Governor White agreed with Ashworth on the significances of liberal arts noting that "business leaders want well rounded graduates" with knowledge of history and literature. He went on to cite the need for intensive technical training, training and retraining graduates for "the real world." Calling education a major priority funding item, White sees as the goals of higher education "preparedness, recruitment, and retention." He, too, is concerned about faculty salaries: "We can't afford mediocrity....We have no choice but to pay competitive salaries."

Of particular interest to NHCC/UF members were White's concerns over faculty attitudes and morale. He announced plans to invite Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, to come to Texas to advise him on how to achieve "inspired teaching....We must combine talents with pride... [and] build allegiance and commitment." Governor White added that he is impressed with the leadership in TUF in seeking excellence.

Those of us who attended the symposium came away enthusiastic about the future of higher education and were especially gratified by the recognition given to the AFT -- a professional organization dedicated to quality higher education and in the avante-garde in achieving that goal.

Rhinehart Receives Award

Union member Marilyn Rhinehart was recognized at the January Board of Trustees meeting for her work in organizing the NHCC celebration of the Texas Sesquicentennial. She has been the moving force behind arrangements for more than thirty-five separate activities listed in the Sesquicentennial Handbook distributed to faculty recently. After Marilyn spoke to the Board about the project, Chairman Brad York presented her with a beautiful pewter and crystal paperweight with a Lone Star design and the dates 1836-1986. We are proud of you, Marilyn, and we appreciate all your hard work to produce a splendid program.

Rookie Trustee Shows Sesquicentennial Spirit

In its December meeting the Board reviewed the fact that an old house stands on the West Campus property and began discussing what to do with it. The house, built in 1800's, is apparently one of the oldest remaining structures in the Tomball metropolitan area. Two local historical societies have expressed interest in preserving it, possibly creating a small park around it. When asked for his opinion as a Tomball resident, recently-appointed trustee Elmer Beckendorf said that the house isn't worth much and that he would "doze it down" if it were his.