

The Daily

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Is Jim Hunt Too Busy

Last year, the people of North Carolina elected Gov. Jim Hunt again, but is he too busy for the job?

He's been chairman of the national advisory board for the Mental Health Services for Youth program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and was instrumental in getting Kentucky to adopt the program.

Feb. 1-3, Gov. Hunt was at the National Governors' Association meeting touting the September 1996 "Report of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future," which he chaired.

He was chosen Feb. 4 to chair the National Education Goals Panel. But, in 1996 National Education Goals Report indicated marijuana use had increased in N.C. schools from 15 percent in 1993 to 22 percent in 1995 and student disruptions in N.C. schools had risen from 42 percent in 1991 to 53 percent in 1994. In fact, 82,000 students were reported to have been in out-of-school suspensions in 1995-96.

President Praised Hunt

The night of Feb. 4, President Clinton in his "State of the Union"

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address praised Gov. Hunt's educational efforts. The president called for "national standards" and to gauge these standards in the next two years "develop national tests of student achievement in reading and math."

Many people are concerned about nationalizing education. And what about the standards? What if the math standards were like the disastrous "new math?" And what if the English standards were based upon the faulty "whole language" reading instruction method used in most schools rather than the proven successful intensive phonics method?

Severely Criticized

President Clinton also called for "character education," but what if the values reflected the "political correctness" of the national history standards released a couple of years ago? They were severely criticized by Lynne Cheney, former head of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

U.S. Department of Education Secretary Richard Riley's Special Assistant, Jennifer Davis, told me Gov. Hunt and several other governors supported the president's "national standards."

On Feb. 12, I asked Gov. Hunt's press secretary, Sean Walsh, if the governor supported Clinton's call for "national standards." Mr. Walsh said he'd check and later called me saying Gov. Hunt supported higher standards, serving