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SAVINGS ATTAINABLE THROUGH REVISIONS OF CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS TO AVOID EXCESS SEATING CAPACITY IN SCHOOL DINING FACILITIES, BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

As a result of our review the Bureau has revised its construction standards, and we estimate that construction and furniture costs of dining facilities at four 1,000-pupil schools being planned by the Bureau will be lowered by about \$146,000 as a result of the reduction in excess seating capacity. In addition, savings in construction and furniture costs can be realized by the reduction of seating capacities of dining facilities at smaller schools.

In 1957 the Bureau established a standard for the construction of dining facilities which provided for a seating capacity of 50 percent of the maximum school enrollment in the main dining room. We examined operations of dining facilities at five selected schools and observed that the number of seats used at the point of maximum occupancy was less than 400, even though in some instances more than 1,000 pupils were fed. The number of seats vacant at the point of maximum occupancy ranged from 150 to 275.

Our observations showed that the capacity of serving lines and the turnover rate of pupils in the dining areas, rather than the size of the student body, are the principal factors that determine the number of seats needed in a dining facility. Since the Bureau apparently did not consider these limiting factors in 1957, the standard of providing seating capacity in dining facilities for 50 percent of the maximum enrollment of schools is unrealistic, in our opinion, and significant additional construction and furniture costs have been incurred. Moreover, action was not taken to revise the 50-percent seating standard although a cognizant Bureau official formally advised the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1962 that the seating standard being used resulted in overbuilding dining facilities at schools with large student enrollments.

After we brought our findings to the attention of Department officials, we were advised in August 1965 that the Bureau initiated a study of dining facility operations and we were informed in December 1965 of the results of the survey. After further discussions with Bureau officials in January and February 1966, we were advised that construction standards for dining facilities at schools with enrollments of more than 479 pupils would be revised and that plans for a new standard 1,000-pupil school dining facility had been completed. Our comparison of these revised plans with the plans previously used for a standard 1,000-pupil school dining facility showed that the dining area was reduced from about 9,000 to about 6,300 square feet, or a reduction of about 30 percent. On the basis of cost data furnished by the Bureau, we estimate that construction and furniture costs at four 1,000-pupil schools being planned by the Bureau will be lowered by about \$146,000 as a result of the reduction of excess seating capacity.

Although the Bureau took action to reduce excess seating capacity in school dining facilities after we brought our findings to the attention of the Department, the action taken was based on the results of a survey of dining operations that appeared questionable since actual