

The Natural Resources subcommittee on Conservation and Public Participation met on February 3, 1977, at 8:30 a.m. in room 437, with Chairman Bengtson presiding, Reps. Curtiss, Nathe and Harper present. This meeting was called to get input from the Supt. of Public Instruction's office and the Governor's office on what would be useful in the way of new legislation to aid them in disseminating energy education.

Ralph Hay, Superintendent of Public Instructions's Office, said they have developed bibliographies of energy sources for the use of the teachers. He passed around a pamphlet showing their goals--one goal is the environment. He said tests have been developed for each goal which are administered to sixth grade students.

Jerry Toner, Governor's office, said he thought energy conservation was one of the most important areas today. He believes the education part belonged in the Superintendent's office. He said their part is to coordinate agencies, provide pertinent information and increase public awareness.

Chairman Bengtson said the only bill that speaks on energy education is HB 204. She read the section.

Jerry Toner said they were fearful of dictating curriculum. He said it was pretty much up to the Board of Education to determine what goes to the public school.

Ralph Hay said he agreed. He said there is a statute on the books that has never been implemented. It sets up a conservation staff position in their office, however, it has never been funded.

Rep. Harper asked who manages the upkeep of the buildings.

Georgia Ruth Rice, Supt. of Public Instruction, said they have a manager for their buildings. However, the different schools are on a local level. Through the vehicle of Montana schools we would like to enlighten them how to conserve and save energy, she said.

Tom Ryan, Supt.'s Office, told of informational meetings a group had once a month to gain input into the problem. He said if we educate the children to turn off lights and be energy conscious they will grow up to be energy savers--change the American way of life.

Ralph Hay said Fairmount Book Co. had 150 school people in from across the state and then these people had individual programs for the teachers in their own schools. He also mentioned bus transportation--each school has their own and at times travel the same road. Obvious savings could be had.

Chairman Bengtson said the thing the committee is concerned with is--are we addressing the problem--are we proceeding along the right lines now? You people are most directly involved with energy education in the state of Montana--should we be providing guidelines and directives.

Tom Ryan said he thought there should be a resolution that energy conservation be encouraged in the schools.

Chairman Bengtson read the recommendation for education from the report of the Citizens Advisory Committee on Energy.

Mrs. Rice said they can and would be glad to disseminate material the teachers can use. She said the mandate mentioned in the report would be more effective coming from the governor's office. She felt the resolution mentioned by Mr. Ryan would give some of the needed awareness. She said the people are concerned and want to be sure you are concerned. But she said putting energy into the curriculum as a mandate is not the way to go.

Rep. Curtiss asked if there were film strips available which could be used by the extension clubs, etc.

Mrs. Rice said we have the material and it is not expensive--we have to get the teachers to want to use it. She said they want to stay away from saying "You have to!" She felt this should be encouraged on the local level and then it would be taught.

Jerry Toner said we don't have to spend a lot of money--the real need is to get the schools and teachers to want to teach it. He also mentioned that a lot of energy is wasted on the transportation system. He said amending the speed law is up--and if people would only obey the speed laws as is they could save 3 billion BTU a year which would far surpass anything we could do in the way of education programs. He also felt there was much waste in the heating of the schools--buildings needed to be retrofitted.

Mrs. Rice said when an educational crunch comes the local people often turn to the state and say "Help us" when they should be helping themselves. She said local control is given away not taken away. She said a resolution might get your representative and senator when they go back home to push their local school district to really look at the problem. People need to understand that it is their school. She said there is 637 school districts in Montana.

Rod Johnson, head of school bus transportation in Great Falls, said they operate 75 buses. He said while Mrs. Rice was safety consultant in the Superintendent's Office she devised a curriculum in public transportation safety and integrated the material with the other subjects--could the same be done for energy education. He said the biggest gripe of the teacher is to find time to teach.

Rep. Curtis asked if film strips are available to the public library.

Mrs. Rice said we are one of the few states that have a film library. Most film libraries have been turned over to other agencies because it is an expensive effort. She said they have not gone to film strips for this reason--we can tell where they are available and it would cost more to mail them than to have a district or group buy them as they are not expensive. Films, however, are available to any group after the schools are serviced.

Mrs. Rice said the resources are available the key to this is to get people at the local level to put some emphasis on conservation in their schools on the local level through local organizations. If they went to busing they would save a few cars on the road -- safer and save energy.

Mrs. Curtiss asked if that would extend the limit beyond where it is now.

Mrs. Rice said school districts are reimbursed beyond the three mile limit, but it is up to the local school district if they wish to bus within this three mile limit.

The subcommittee decided to draft a resolution to:

Urge the school districts to implement policies regarding conservation of energy in relationship to man's present life style.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Esther G. Bengtson

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