

MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE LEGISLATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS FOR EDUCATION

February 3, 1977

8:00 A. M.

Room 132

State Capitol Building

Subject: Agricultural  
Experiment Station

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Carroll South.  
The following members were present:

Sen. Matt Hims1  
Sen. Larry Fasbender  
Rep. Ora Halvorson  
Rep. Jack Moore  
Sen. Oscar Kvaalen

Those present for the meeting who testified were as follows:

Dr. J. A. Asteson, Agricultural Experiment Station  
Tom Nopper, Finance, Montana State University  
Richard H. Ostegrin, Missoula County Commissioner  
Bob Thoft, Ravalli County Weed Control Board  
Jack Iman, Montana State Grange  
John Driscoll, District 91  
Jack Noble, Office of Commissioner of Higher Education

The meeting was called to order by Chairman South. He introduced Dr. J. A. Asteson from the Agricultural Experiment Station at MSU. Dr. Asteson had prepared material for each member of the committee which outlined the new programs being requested in this year's budget. The programs which are outlined in detail in the material are as follows:

1. Weed Control Position replacing an ARS position that was located in Bozeman. It was vacated one year ago and the position has not been filled. They feel that it leaves them in the position of developing a bigger weed control research and control program.
2. An Entomology Research Position. Three retirements in the last few years. They did not replace them since they needed funds some place else. They are under pressure to develop this program and do research on pest control.
3. Technicians to do some research that staff does not have time to do. The Board of Regents did not fund this.
4. Immunologist in the Veterinarian Research Laboratory. This is the other half of the request that was presented two years ago. One half of the program was approved. Needs are increasing in this area. They are putting more emphasis on prevention and less on cure. There is no one in this position at the present time.

5. Range and Livestock. A position where they are responding to requests from people for this information. We have 1.5 people doing research on 68 million acres. There is work for more. Interested in a combination type of approach.

6. Plant Pathology Position. Work is sowing seed. They feel they will need to cut back in the fallow-type systems in many areas. We are going to have to go to continual cropping where rainfall justifies it. An entirely new environment must be set up. Disease problems and weed problems are spreading that have not been so serious in past years in the fallow-type farming.

These requests are more fully described in the handouts which Dr. Asteson distributed.

Rep. John Driscoll testified in behalf of farmers and ranchers in the Bitterroot area who have contacted him regarding the need for a Weed Control Program and an Entomology Research Position. He said that they were concerned about the establishment of a Biological Weed Control Program using biologically cultured insects to attack specific weeds that are spreading throughout the state. The request is for \$30 to \$40,000 for the funding of this position. They also need re-direction of the program in the Bitterroot Valley.

Rep. Driscoll introduced Bob Thoft who has served on the Weed Control Board in Ravalli County. He spoke in support of a full-time biologist working in cooperation with Montana State University in control of weeds. He said that a graduate student had been working in this area was supported through contributions. He said that in July, 1977, they would be completely out of funds. He is on a budget of \$15,000 which they feel is inadequate. They are asking for \$40,000 for this program.

Richard H. Ostingren, Missoula County Commissioner, testified in behalf of a Weed Control Position. It would be, he said, considered an add-on and in addition to the requests of Dr. Asteson's requests.

Chairman South asked if there was anyone now working in biological weed control? Mr. Ostingren answered that there is a man who has just graduated--Jim Story--who is working there now. He is supported partly through contributions, some from county government, and partly from experiment station funds. They are running out of funds and will have to discontinue the program. It was felt that it was the only way to get control of the weeds since there are so many regulations against the use of pesticides.

Chairman South asked John Driscoll if he would get the committee a specific request in writing. Rep. Driscoll indicated that he would.

Rep. Moore asked if the appropriation request was not included in HB 312. Re. Driscoll said that he didn't have all the figures at the time the bill was put together. This request would be part of the Agricultural Research Station, sponsored by the state, but this particular request is separate from the request that Dr. Asteson is making. He said that he didn't have a chance to talk to Dr. Asteson

before the meeting so no one was aware that they would be requesting this program in addition to the one that was scheduled to be heard.

Sen. Himsel wanted to know if it would be possible to include the two requests in one bill. Rep. Driscoll said that is what he was hoping for rather than treating it as one separate bill.

Chairman South opened discussion regarding the fiscal analyst's budget recommendations. Dr. Asteson distributed copies of the budget as they felt their needs were and this is included with the minutes of this meeting. The fiscal analyst recommended a general fund decrease of \$1,842,000 which would eliminate the new programs. Dr. Asteson said that he is concerned because he felt the fiscal analyst used the 1976 expenditures as a base and then increased this by about 7% for cost of living and 10% for capital for 1978. Because of inflationary increases, they felt this was not a practical budget since it gave them only an increase of 3.5% per year. It was exclusive of salaries, also. He said that the feeling is that the cost has gone up considerably more than that and he used a table of consumer price index to demonstrate his figures.

There was discussion concerning the fact that the main income for the Agricultural Experiment Station is from the raising and selling of bulls. This program also supports the swine program which has needed financial help from time to time. Dr. Asteson said that is of concern to him the market fluctuation since they have had very high prices for the livestock they've raised and the price that they got for bulls at the Winter Fair in Bozeman this year was an all-time low. He feels that it is something they can't depend on.

Chairman South asked if they got the \$500,000 they are requesting and the \$500,000 that Judy is projecting also comes through from federal funding, what would they do with the extra \$500,000. Dr. Asteson said that it would be carried over into the next year.

In reviewing the requested budget, Senator Fasbender asked Dr. Asteson if he really anticipated that revenues would fall to the extent that there would be a \$250,000 discrepancy. He said in his experiences as a rancher, he knew there was fluctuation in the market but he thought these figures were extravagant.

Dr. Asteson said that he felt that the figures he had projected were quite conservative. He said there are great variations in what the ranchers will and can pay for our bulls. It is of great concern to us what can happen in the market.

There was discussion regarding the Miles City branch of MSU's work. This is where the swine program is located. Dr. Asteson said that he felt that the \$525,000 increase projected by the fiscal analyst was too much for that program. He said that they anticipated \$400,000. There was testimony from Martin Burris concerning the Miles City project. He spoke of the changes in the research program, rising costs and their need for various equipment at that project.

Martin Burris said that in past years most of the equipment had been leased but in the last two years there have been several increases in leasing and that they now felt it was more economical for them to buy the machinery and equipment that they needed.

Senator Fasbender asked them if they could be specific regarding what equipment they needed. They said that they didn't have a list with them and that needs came up from time to time and it was difficult to anticipate just what they would be needing. Senator Fasbender questioned this, saying that he felt they might be able to be a little more specific in stating their needs.

Dr. Asteson said that the ranching operation is over a 75,000 acre area including Miles City and that because market prices are so changeable as they are from year to year, he feels that they are justified in wanting to carry over a certain amount of money to be used in case of emergencies or for improvements. He said that he felt they were responsible enough to have this authority and he hated to be broke every June.

Senator Fasbender asked Dr. Asteson if he would have any objection to us tying in a provisial to the appropriations bill that anything that is generated as far as the main station is concerned over the amount that you have estimated you will make will revert.

Dr. Asteson hesitated but said that he felt if they were able to save money or make money over what they had estimated, that they should be able to spend it in the operation for things that they knew were needed. He spoke again of equipment and also said that when they had some surplus last year they had put in sprinkler systems in Miles City. He said that if the legislature sees fit to put a limit on them, they will live with it, but we'd like to be able to carry over a certain amount from year to year in case of emergencies.

Senator Fasbender asked him how much reserve he felt he needed and Dr. Asteson answered that he felt \$100,000.00 would be a reasonable amount to carry over. He said that in this type of operation, you never know when you will meet an emergency and need money. He spoke of other years when they needed extra money because of loss of crops and loss of animals due to disease. He said that they must have a reserve that they can feel safe with. We want the right to save what we can and use it where we feel we need it.

Chairman South recommended that equipment needs be included in the budget instead of being purchased at will out of the reserve. Senator Fasbender said that he felt a complete inventory should be made of what equipment is going to be needed so the committee could know what is being done with money allocated.

Jack Noble from the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education tesified briefly in behalf of Dr. Asteson and the work that has been done at the Agricultural Station. He was in support of the budget requests that Dr. Asteson had made.


There was a brief discussion regarding the raising of hybrid plants and the problems encountered. They would like to be able to pursue this type of farming on a larger scale in the future as they feel

as land becomes more scarce, it will be a valuable way of farming. More could be grown in this way in smaller areas.

Jack Inman, Montana State Grange, testified as to the need for a position in Weed Control Program and in support of the budget presented by the Agricultural Experiment Station. A copy of his testimony is included with the minutes.

A tape has been made of this meeting and is on file in the office of the Fiscal Analyst.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 A. M.

  
CARROLL V. SOUTH, CHAIRMAN

  
Betsy Clark, Secretary