

HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
April 1, 1981

The House Education Committee convened at 1:15 p.m., April 1, 1981, in Room 129 of the State Capitol, with Chairman Eudaily presiding and a quorum present. Reps. Azzara, Donaldson, Kennerly, Kitselman, Meyer, O'Hara, Williams and Yardley were excused.

Chairman Eudaily opened the meeting to a hearing on the following bill.

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 49

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN VINCENT, District No. 78, chief sponsor, said this is a resolution requesting an interim study on teacher tenure that was promised after the other tenure bills were killed. He said this merits getting on the priority list.

REP. MICHAEL KEEDY said he was very much in favor of this resolution principally because he had become increasingly aware of a serious decline in quality education. He said maybe it is wrong, but he feels it could be related to the problem of tenure. We have created a dichotomy among the teaching staff. There are those who haven't acquired tenure so can be fired on a whim. They are under a great deal of pressure to conform to administration demands and this can have a chilling effect on a beginning teacher's desire to show some innovative or originality in classroom performance. On the other hand once a teacher acquires tenure, administrations have a more relaxed attitude and the teacher is practically untouchable. Some teachers with tenure become satisfied and relaxed and do not produce to the limits of their capacity. Some go to sleep in their professions as their performance will never be called into question. The ones who suffer the most are the children and the parents. We need to request a system that erases this monster we have created through tenure and come up with some responsible alternatives that can promote a return to higher quality teaching performance.

Since Rep. Keedy had to leave to attend another meeting, Chairman Eudaily asked if there were any questions for him. Rep. Hannah said both sides are immovable in regards to tenure. Did he really believe that these people will come to the table and work out a workable situation? If they don't this is just an exercise in futility.

Rep. Keedy said he did hold out hope that both the School Board Association, the School Administrators and the Montana Education Association could in the interim work toward some kind of accommodation.

WAYNE BUCHANAN, School Boards Association, said he rises as a proponent. He said he wasn't as sure as Rep. Keedy that a middle ground could be found that is acceptable to both sides, but they are willing to try and he felt it was something that had to be done. He said extreme care must be taken in the selection of the committee.

DAVID SEXTON, Montana Education Association, complimented Rep. Vincent on the resolution on tenure that was created in such a way that both sides could agree on it. He said they, too, are willing to try to find a solution to the problems. He said if it is a balanced committee willing to work toward reaching that accommodation, he thinks it is possible to find a solution.

Rep. Vincent in closing said we all recognize that the tenure law is a problem for all sides and because of this we had bills on it coming from different directions. The subcommittee felt we couldn't solve the problems but we did get initial signs that both sides will try to work together to reach something. He said he didn't know if any accommodations could be reached but there would be some inherent value in the study anyway. The studies would provide a basis for people to make more rational decisions on what is a very controversial situation.

During questions from the committee, Rep. Anderson asked about the public meetings mentioned. Rep. Vincent said every committee meeting is an open meeting and the public can come. He said he didn't envision the committee traveling around the state.

Chairman Eudaily said the study has a lot of merit if it just gets the various parties to set down and express their concerns and be exposed to the concerns of others. This could lead to some new legislation down the line even if no direct resolution comes of it.

Rep. Vincent said all groups can see the Legislature is interested in the problem and it might be an incentive for them to get together and try to work out something. This could be the last session when nothing is done, as something is going to give on tenure.

Rep. Lory put in a word of caution. He said the Legislature has been known to totally ignore the recommendations of an interim committee.

Rep. Hanson said he favored the resolution. He felt it could be a last hope for education to do something to overcome the adverse role. It could start from teacher participation in the teacher evaluation process. He said the teachers and the teacher organizations and the school boards and administrators really want the same thing - to pinpoint the incompetent teachers and get rid of them.

Rep. Dussault moved DO PASS. The motion carried unanimously with those present. Leaving absentee votes in favor were Reps. Meyer, O'Hara and Yardley.

Meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



RALPH S. EUDAILY, Chairman

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