

Tom:

Nelson

April 7

We had a major meeting with Sen. Reichgott late Saturday afternoon to go over the comments/suggestions from both the MSBA and MFT.

She made a number of decisions . . . good ones, I think:

- * She'll move straight to a licensed-teachers position; striking the business about the teachers having the opportunity to relax licensing if they wish. She wants something she can point to right away, as evidence she listened and accommodated. We all felt this is OK as long as the teachers can write their own contract in their own, separate bargaining unit. (More about this below.)
- * She will drop the post-secondaries out as eligible sponsors but will resist pressures at this time to weaken the proposers' access to the State Board as a sponsor. She expects Sen. Dahl and perhaps Sen. Dicklich also to be responsive to opponents' appeal to give the local district "a right of first refusal". But she recognizes this is the last chip, and if she gives this away before conference she will be going into conference with nothing to give (re: sponsors) except the idea of the State Board itself. This would be fatal. So she will talk to Dahl and Dicklich and try to persuade them not to let this idea come up until conference.
- * She will hold on the school being/having its own bargaining unit; which is essential to let the new school be different from existing schools. This seems now to be in her mind as one of the fundamentals, along with the 'somebody else'.
- * She'll make a variety of other, minor changes; some suggested by Tom Deans.

The bill will appear next as one of the (later) sections of the omnibus aids bill. Procedurally SF 630 will in effect disappear. There will be hearings and an opportunity for opponents to be heard (as there was not, in subcommittee). But it will be on that title/article of the omnibus bill.

*

Some of the issues came into better focus as a result of the meeting Friday . . . which did turn out to be largely for the benefit of Sandy Peterson.

For starters, the Federation irritated Reichgott seriously by opening with a new letter from Barry Noack in which he 'took back' the agreement he and Louise had made in the earlier meeting to accept the State Board as a sponsor if Reichgott would drop the post-secondaries.

Then they indicated they were not really interested in helping her 'perfect' the bill. The discussion kept coming back to the

basic objections: "We can do this now" and "This is not the way to help public education".

In the earlier meeting you, Jim, Joe and others had argued that it's hard (tho perhaps possible) to "do it now" . . . and that while the board may be able to "do it now" the teachers certainly can't. After this last Friday's meeting another response came clear . . . which is simply to say "Of course districts can do it now. Absolutely. The point is that only the district can do it now. What the Legislature is trying to do with this bill is to make it possible for someone else also to 'do it' -- to give a school professional autonomy, or to start a different school or program new.

This links into the issue about how to help public education. In effect the major organizations arguing for the traditional way -- helping from within. Charter-school proponents have the same objective: to help all schools. The disagreement is simply over methods. The charter-school proponents want to have two ways to cause improvement: adding the pressure from the 'new model' to all the things the Legislature will help the districts to do internally.

*

She mentioned the letter you'd sent her. Clearly, that meant a lot to her. She very much hopes you can help on the House side. I told her you'd said you would be there; and even available to say a word if needed.

*Bruce
April 10*
She asked about other indicators of support for the idea, that might appear. For example: People writing articles for the opinion page. Brandl, for example, has good access there; and is certainly supportive. My own sense is that an article would mean more under your name. Would you consider that?

*

Reichgott almost certainly won't be on the conference committee; being so involved in taxes. She can be there when charter schools is discussed. But she can't vote. Who will be on, would you guess?

*

Reichgott
At the end of Friday's meeting Reichgott told the teachers-group representatives that she was not going to give on the basics, and that the Senate is going to pass the bill.

I walked out with Louise Sunday. "I'm going to spend my time on the important bills," she grumbled . . . or something like that.