

Our day will come

The issue of MEA-MFT TODAY that you are holding in your hands right now is all about hope and effort. The hope that we – all of us – could with enough effort compel the 2003 Legislature to do better by our public schools, university units, and state agencies.

There we are, gathered in “Stand Up for Education” rallies all over Montana, pushing adequate state funding of k-higher education.

There we are in “Work that Matters,” exploring the legislature to honor state employees with something much more compelling than the governor’s proposed pay freeze and increased vacancy savings and work load.

There are the media, paying attention to our rallies and our campaign to “put a face” on public employees.

There we are, elected local delegates to our fourth annual representative assembly, walking capitol hallways bearing messages from home, and for one brief shining moment tipping the partisan political balance in favor of our statewide school employee health care pool.

There we are, growing the Montana Quality Education Coalition, a seriously hopeful effort to convince the courts that Montana’s woefully inadequate school funding scheme is intolerably unconstitutional.

There we are, promoting yet another MEA-MFT conference – this time our biennial Classified and Public Employees Conference – meant to prepare, encourage, perhaps even inspire our members in their professional and union work.

There we are, accepting monetary support from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana to better endow the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation so that we might better prepare, develop, and honor the teaching profession right here in our own state.

This is what this issue of MEA-MFT TODAY is all about.

Legislative indifference

Unfortunately, my guess is that by the time

you receive this edition filled with multiple examples of hope and effort, this ugly, irresponsible, libertarian “no-tax-no-spend,” no-compromise 2003 Legislature will have dismissed our testimony, cut deeply into our programs, failed to increase state employee salaries, enormously underfunded our schools, and be half-way out of town.

Keep the faith

This is when it gets hard. This is when it gets really hard, when the governor and legislators reject our hopes and best efforts and make decisions that hurt so much.

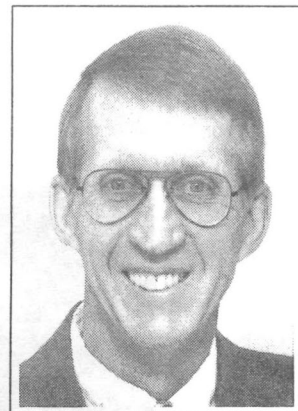
But no matter how this miserable legislative session ends, we must not give in, give up, lose hope. We must not resign ourselves to cynicism and despair. We absolutely must not, now or ever.

MEA-MFT will continue to fight for our members and the Montana people we serve. We will continue to help our members achieve higher levels of professionalism and compensation.

And we will organize all available resources to help elect a 2005 Legislature that likes public schools and public service and is willing to put money where its mouth is.

Our day will come. ■

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BY ERIC FEAYER
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