

"Line them up and shoot them"

In this election year, MEA-MFT has recommended a long list of candidates.

We have recommended candidates who believe in and support public education, pre-kindergarten through graduate school. We have recommended candidates who believe in and support the power and purpose of government programs and services. In short, we have recommended candidates who believe in and support MEA-MFT and the work our members do.

We know, however, from experience that politics is personal, local, and/or partisan. We know our candidate recommendations rarely challenge well-established political loyalties. We know we make mistakes. We know our recommendations frustrate or even anger some of our members at least some of the time.

But we also know that all things being equal – if there is no controlling personal, local, or partisan loyalty – our members tend to vote for our recommended candidates.

Sometimes it is almost impossible to decide which candidate is best. Sometimes the differences are simply not clear and bright.

But more often than not, the differences are obvious and can be overwhelming, even appalling.

Such is the case in the race for Superintendent of Public Instruction.

We have recommended Linda McCulloch.

For 20 years, Linda has taught the children at Bonner Elementary School. Yes, as a librarian, she has been very much a teacher. For the past six years, Linda has served with distinction in the Montana State Legislature wherein she has earned Republican and Democratic respect for bipartisan problem solving.

And Linda is our member. We could not be more proud that one of our own has so ably prepared herself to lead Montana public education.

In contrast, we oppose Elaine Sollie Herman.

Elaine is not certified to teach in Montana. Her certificate expired in 1993. According to the Associated Press, she ended her classroom experience as a substitute in 1991. She has no public leadership experience.

But she does have a way with words.

Last March, at a Republican Lincoln Day Din-

ner, Elaine attacked outgoing superintendent Nancy Keenan and MEA-MFT stating, "Nancy Keenan and Eric Feaver are promoting a master plan that is going to rage like a cancer that will build an education bureaucracy that you wouldn't believe."

In July, Elaine failed to appear at a scheduled interview with the political action committees of the former MEA and MFT, now known as MEA-MFT COPE. But she did provide us a written statement that plainly placed her in the camp of folks who support privatization of

our public schools. This came as no great surprise, for we already knew that two of her primary supporters were, and continue to be, Rob Natelson and Tom Keating – both persistent, tenacious and occasionally mean-spirited advocates of throwing scarce public resources at unaccredited, unregulated private, sectarian, and home schools. In addition, Elaine opined that school librarians are not really teachers and only a parent is qualified to be superintendent.

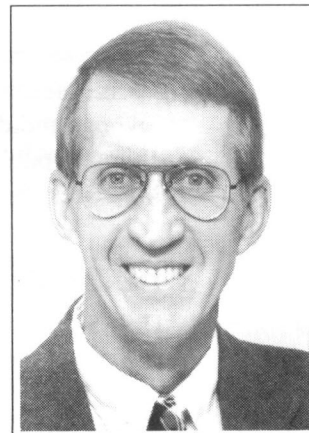
In September, Elaine informed the Western Montana Retired Teachers Association that teachers hate their jobs and are just biding their time until retirement.

The same month, she told the Montana Agri-Women that to restore student discipline in our public schools, **"I'm going to give every teacher a gun and a holster and tell them to line them up and shoot them. I really wanted to say that really bad. I have for a year, and I've never said it in public before."**

Enough! We can only wonder what Elaine has been saying in private.

The differences between Linda and Elaine are profound. Linda McCulloch is an experienced, dedicated, caring advocate for kids and quality public schools. Linda is a champion of classroom teachers and the parents and communities they serve.

Elaine Sollie Herman is embarrassing, bereft of appropriate experience and a circumspect tongue. Elaine Sollie Herman is unqualified to be Superintendent of Public Instruction. ■



BY ERIC FEAVER
MEA-MFT PRESIDENT