

## Minutes 2003 Annual CESE Meeting

Outgoing President Bill MacPherson called the 7th annual CESE meeting to order about 1 PM at the First Unitarian Church. He passed around a copy of a page from a home school textbook that someone brought to share, entitled "Men in the Bible who saw Dinosaurs."

Bill MacPherson's speech began with the efforts of Intelligent Design (ID). They have had mixed success in getting their wedge in science standards throughout the country. In Ohio, ID was specifically mentioned as a topic that was not to be included in the state's science curriculum.

The ID community took this as a success because it was the first time that ID was even mentioned in any state's science standards. This stance was similar to the Santorum Amendment, that only appeared in the conference report of the bill, "No Child Left Behind." The IDer's claimed that it is now the law of the land.

New Mexico's revised science standards contain some subtle changes desired by ID and opposed by CESE. It is uncertain at this time how the SBE will decide.

Regarding the special election to be held September 23rd, the CESE board opposes the amendment to the state constitution that would abolish the state Board of Education (SBE), as we know it, replacing it with a 10 member advisory commission. Also opposed is replacing the existing state Superintendent of Public Education with a governor-appointed, cabinet level secretary of education. The current data show the type of governance has no effect on student performance. The short term effect of such a change would be expensive and disruptive, and many beneficial initiatives that the SBE has started may fall through the cracks.

The second amendment to be considered by the electorate this September concerns the amount of money to be siphoned off the Permanent School Fund. The current amount is 4.7 percent of the corpus of the fund, which amounts to several billion dollars. Although CESE favors funds for education, the CESE board is concerned about the long-term viability of the fund, if too much money is drawn off of it.

Some CESE board members met with Virginia Trujillo, an aide to Governor Richardson, on June 9th to discuss the governance issue and the Permanent Fund. She didn't have all the details on how the Permanent Fund increase would work without drawing down the fund's principal. She suggested we talk to Gary Bland, the state Investment Officer. CESE is trying to arrange such a meeting.

Members were asked to pay dues, which help support speakers and awards for science fair winners.

Quest speaker, Bill Hume, was next. He is currently the Governor's Policy and Planning Director and was formerly the editorial editor of the *Albuquerque Journal*.

Bill Hume said education and politics are interrelated. He spent most of his career in newspaper journalism, where he was on the outside looking in, with respect to government. Now he said, he is on the inside looking out. He was an editorial writer, one of those people, he quipped, "who come down off the mountain after the battle and kill the wounded."

He thought there was little reader reaction from editorials, and he was very much looking forward to retirement. One morning while he was taking a walk near the Journal Center, he got a call on his cell phone. It was the governor who said, "I like the way you think." Hume thought that someone had been reading his editorials after all. He said he could have backed away gracefully; he was old enough, but if he didn't do it, he would have wondered for the rest of his life what he had missed. So he accepted the governor's offer.

Good policy making involves politics, Hume said, and Governor Richardson is a good politician. He catered to both the Democrats and Republican during the legislative session. Five hundred bills were passed in the last three days of the session. Statutory law must be precise, and it can also be disingenuous. The Governor and his staff have 21 days to determine what is actually in these bills, and whether to sign or veto them. Richardson runs his office like a doctor's practice, with visitors waiting in different rooms, like patients. Richardson goes from room to room, meeting with each person.

Does Richardson want to be president? Hume asked. Who knows, but he wants to be the best governor the state has ever had.

Hume favors both amendments that will go to the voters in September. The state Board of Education, with all due respect to Marshall Berman, is a broken institution, Hume said. It caters to special interest groups such as teachers unions and creationists, and it is a fourth branch of government. Hume favors the amendment that would replace the state Board of Education (SBE) with a secretary of education, appointed by the governor. The current functions of the SBE would be assigned to smaller, local boards around the state. Now the governor has no authority to control education.

Hume also favors passing the amendment SJR 6 which would amend the

state's constitution to increase from 4.7 percent to 5.0 percent. That is the amount of annual distribution from the Permanent Fund to fund educational reform, as long as the average of the year-end market values of the fund for the immediately preceding five calendar years is no less than \$5.8 billion. This would generate \$72 million per year to education. There are safety valves, if the growth of the fund doesn't happen, Hume said. If the funding and authority is given, changes can be made, such as giving laptop computers to 7th graders.

Questions, comments and concerns followed Hume's speech. Hume was asked how much money was in the campaign fund to pass these amendments. Others asked about too much power given to the governor, less accountability and less democracy should the governance change be approved. Other comments were that SBE meetings are open to the public and that future cabinet level meetings might not be. Also asked was how would the public provide input into the new system. And how would the Governor look at equity within schools and school systems? Hume admitted he didn't know if they could turn it around and that he was not an expert on school governance.

Richardson's opponent in the gubernatorial race was John Sanchez, who said on the radio during the gubernatorial campaign that he was in favor of ID. Would Richardson publicly oppose Intelligent Design/creationist as science? Hue said Richardson tends to avoid controversial issues; he's not a bad politician, but he would ask the governor.

Another questioner asked if some sort of plan should be in place before increasing funds to education. Hume said it would pay for the 6% teacher pay raise, and that nothing will change without the money. He also added that he wasn't a financial expert.

Following Hume, was Dave Thomas who performed his famous lie detector card trick.

The slate of officers was then introduced and elected. The new slate is:

president: Art Edwards  
vice-president/president elect: Marshall Berman  
past president: Bill MacPherson  
treasurer: Jerry Shelton  
secretary: Marilyn Savitt-Kring

board members at large:

Steve Brugge  
Kim Johnson

Tim Moy  
Matt Nyman  
Dave Thomas

Newly elected president Art Edwards spoke next. He said he had attended the first CESE meeting in 1997 and was very honored to be in his current position. CESE had many challenges. Teaching of evolution is the common goal. Long term goals are scientific literacy and understanding the scientific process. There is a need to raise the bar in science education. There is a dire shortage of science teachers, and the way science is taught has to be revamped.

The short-term goals are to have the New Mexico's new science standards approved. Marshall Berman added better means of public comment during his tenure on the SBE. Currently, some of the teachers have concerns with the way the standards have been organized, and ID movement is also attempting more input.

Art Edwards then asked each member to introduce him/herself. Following that, there was a group discussion on such topics as science education and science vs. beliefs.

After the formal portion of the meeting adjourned, members reconvened across the courtyard for sandwiches and soft drinks.

Respectfully submitted,

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