

Vermont Environmental Report

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL, A NON-PROFIT CITIZENS' CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION, SUPPORTED BY MEMBERSHIP DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS. VNRC, 26 STATE STREET, MONTPELIER, VERMONT, 05602. (802) 223-2328. CHAIRMAN: DAVID R. MARVIN; EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: SEWARD WEBER; EDITOR: NAT FROTHINGHAM.

Whittaker to Lead State Energy Office

1. Mission

For those who may be curious to know how the Snelling Administration will attack the problem of energy, -- one clue may have been dropped with the appointment of Brendan J. Whittaker as Director of the newly-redefined State Energy Office.

The old State Energy Office under the leadership of Forrest Orr was hastily drawn together in the crisis-ridden days of the Arab Oil Embargo of 1973-1974. It was an Office charged with the then-urgent tasks of inventory and control. There was no statistical base for dealing with energy questions in the State, the Energy Office had to compile such a statistical base, and the operation took on that kind of flavor.

Now, dating from the appointment of Brendan Whittaker on May 1st, there is a new Office and a fresh, activist, mandate.

The new Energy Chief is a direct appointment of the Governor, not a classified civil service employee. He will report to the Governor and his actions will reflect the policies of the Snelling Administration. In a statement explaining the new role of the State Energy Office, Gov. Snelling said that the function of the Office will change from compiling information

about conservation to "doing something about that information." Snelling went on to call for a tougher State Energy Policy and a "pragmatic, sound, viable program" of energy conservation.

This is how Bren Whittaker sees his mission. "Now that the energy situation is getting national attention," he says, "there are plenty of forums for the big questions like nuclear power and the (approach to) OPEC." The resolution of the big issues will take place at higher, at least different levels of Government. What Whittaker and his current staff of three people intend to do is to run programs that will give "tangible help and aid" to Vermonters.

"Courage" has been defined as "grace under pressure" and this is the human dimension that Whittaker appears to be bringing to his problem-fraught assignment.

Whittaker appeared relaxed at an early morning meeting several days ago. He had every reason to feel otherwise. June 15th was the deadline for completion of Vermont's State Energy Plan. June 31st was the due date for a major project proposal to the Energy Research & Development Agency in Washington

Whittaker...

And yet, as he spoke, facing all the gloomy predictions, and the signs of a largely indifferent public, his tone was even and resilient.

2. Federal Money

Whittaker talked about the money that was already on hand to run the State Energy Office, a \$90,000 grant from the New England Regional Commission.

"What about other programs?"

"There will be more than adequate federal money," Whittaker responded reassuringly.

Central to the way that federal dollars will flow to the states is the Carter proposal to bring together under one, unified Department of Energy the host of agencies and separate departments that have responsibilities for addressing energy matters.

The Carter proposal is moving along in Congress. On June 20th it will be discussed by a (House-Senate) Conference Committee. But in the meantime the nation's attack on energy problems is fragmented.

There are the three big guns: the Federal Energy Administration (FEA), the Energy Research & Development Administration (ERDA), and the Federal Power Commission (FPC). And there are a host of other departments and agencies, like HUD, the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Department of Defense, to name a few, that have smaller slices of the pie.

As things stand now, one of the big guns, the Federal Energy Administration is charged with the responsibility of administering two recently passed pieces of legislation with look-alike, confusing titles. These federal laws will affect Vermont directly.

The first is the "Energy Policy & Conservation Act." Under this law, each State must

submit a State Energy Plan. This Plan is a blueprint for action and implementation. In the Plan being drawn up by the State Energy Office, Whittaker and his staff with the approval of Gov. Snelling must say how the State proposes to make specific savings of energy. The target is a 5 percent savings of energy from the projected 145 trillion BTU's that FEA has projected Vermont will require by 1980. When the State Energy Plan has been received and approved by FEA, the State will get \$139,000. And the Energy Office will get more money in a second year.

The second Act bears the title of the "Energy Conservation & Production Act." This Act calls for a supplemental program. It is as if Congress in passing the first Act quickly perceived its limitations, and passed a second. Under the supplemental plan, with a deadline for applications as early as July, the State will get a further \$139,000. Again, there will be more money in the second year. The State Energy Office staff will eventually grow to some fourteen people.

3. Extension Service

There is even more money in the federal coffers. The Energy Research & Development Agency (ERDA) is sponsoring what amounts to a competition among the fifty states for the right to establish a pilot "Energy Extension Service." The prize is a grant that could range up to \$1.1 million.

"What is an 'Energy Extension Service'?"

It is essentially a program of outreach, information and education designed to bring about a reduction in the use of energy on the part of individual consumers and small businesses. Gov. Snelling has given the green light for the State of Vermont to submit a formal application. If Vermont is chosen as one of the ten states in the nation that will receive a grant, an Energy Extension Service will open for business on October 1, 1977 and run for 19 months, until March 31, 1979. But regardless of what happens to Vermont's application, every State in the