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Erling S. Jorgensen Testifies for ETV Bill

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Dr. Erling S. Jorgensen, director of the Montana Educational Television Project, will testify Wednesday and Thursday before the Senate Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce in Washington, D. C., in favor of a bill which, he says, "would give a tremendous boost to Montana education."

SB 205, introduced by Magnuson (D-Wash.), Metcalf (D-Mont.) and others, provides for federal grants of up to $1 million to each state for the purchase of capital equipment for educational television broadcasting, including closed circuit television.

The bill places control of the operation of such facilities in the state, expressly providing that control be exercised by (a) the agency or officer primarily responsible for the State supervision of public elementary and secondary schools, (b) a nonprofit foundation, corporation, or association organized primarily to engage in or encourage educational television broadcasting, (c) a duly constituted State educational television commission, or (d) a State controlled college or university.

In a written statement prepared for the Senate hearing, Dr. Jorgensen notes that Montana's economic problems are currently the subject of considerable controversy in the legislature and are having great impact on education in the state.

"I believe that television can be an effective means for solving these problems," he says. "It is not the only solution nor the total solution, but it can contribute greatly. Should federal funds become available, the development of educational TV in Montana will be a giant step closer to being realized."

(more)
Dr. Jorgensen's testimony outlines the special educational problems created by Montana's large area and small population. The problem is compounded by rising school enrollments and decreasing numbers of available teachers and by the need to teach more subject matter that is attendant upon the rapid increase in knowledge in our time.

"In the face of this three-dimensional problem," he writes, "it is providential that we have at our disposal, if we but choose to use it, a medium which is regarded by many of our leaders in education as the most important single development in teaching in the past one hundred years."

His testimony presents in capsule form some of his conclusions about educational TV, based upon findings of the Montana Educational Television Committee's study project, which he directs. One of these is that television is an effective device for improving the quality of formal courses of instruction and for spreading the influence of good teaching over large numbers of students. He also says that adaptations of television instruction can successfully be made for all age levels, at all levels of instruction from informal to formal.

Dr. Jorgensen includes in appendices to his written statement population and cost figures and a map that show how a network of educational TV stations combining high and low power broadcast transmitters and translators could be devised to reach 75 per cent of Montana's population.