

SCHOOLS ASK END TO DAYLIGHT TIME

By Evan Jenkins

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Leaders of the nation's public schools have won major concessions from the makers of Federal energy policy, but are continuing to press for action on **one of their biggest worries, the danger to children posed by daylight saving time in winter**. The recent regulations from the Federal Energy Office, coupled with public and private assurances of cooperation, have in effect granted the schools the status of a leading national priority in energy planning.

The development has eased problems and allayed fears that began building up in the education community in November, when President Nixon singled out schools as major energy users that could easily cut back.

School leaders charged that they were never consulted about the limited regulations issued by the energy office in December, which they said **virtually ignored the needs of education**.

The shift in policy resulted from demonstrated energy conservation by the schools — often exceeding the goal of a 15 per cent reduction in fuel use set by the Government—plus heavy lobbying and information campaigns by such powerful organizations as the **National School Boards Association** the **National Education Association** and the **American Federation of Teachers**.

Put Pressure On

“We were certainly putting the pressure on, and they knew what we wanted,” said Barbara Rehners of Branford, Conn., president of the school boards association. Her organization held a conference in Washington two weeks ago on “The Schools and the Energy Crunch” that turned into a victory celebration of sorts when the new regulations were issued.

For most heating fuels, the regulations guarantee schools 100 per cent of current needs, provided they lower thermostats by six degrees. Except for hospitals and nursing homes of institutional and commercial users must make a 10-degree cut.

The schools also get 100 per cent of their needs for gasoline to run buses, assuming there is gasoline to be had in local areas. Many businesses will get only what they used in a corresponding period in 1972.

In an important clarification, energy officials said the gasoline allocations to schools would be for field trips and other activities that are part of the educational program, not just for basic transportation to and from school.

Open Mind Promised

Among less tangible gains were the constantly repeated assurances that the rules were flexible and that energy officials would listen to problems and work at finding solutions. The most important assurance was that schools were specifically recognized as essential services.

At a press briefing after a meeting with the leaders of seven major education groups, John C. Sawhill, deputy administrator of the energy office, said:

“We're very pleased with the cooperation shown by the education people. We reiterated our position that closing schools must only be a last retort.”

Daylight saving time was a major concern of participants in the school boards association's conference, as it has been among educators and parents since its imposition Jan. 6. Those who raised the question at the conference were told by energy officials to see their Congressmen, since the time change had been effected by statute, and many did so.

Reversion Is Urged

Such visits have combined with complaints from back home to prompt the movement on Capitol Hill for a reversion to standard time. Much pressure has come from Florida, where eight school-age children have been killed in accidents since daylight time was imposed, compared with two in the same period a year ago. “A spokesman for the state's education department said by telephone from Tallahassee that six of the deaths were clearly attributable to the fact that children were going off to school in darkness.

“It's a very emotional issue here,” the spokesman said, noting that the state legislature was meeting this week to consider switching to standard time.

He also mentioned two other frequently heard complaints. That for schools, there was no energy saving and perhaps some loss, and that changing school hours to start classes in daylight was no answer because it disrupted family schedules.