

# Senior coalition slates conference

The North Country Senior Coalition will conduct a one day senior citizens conference day, September 25 at Lake Placid, New York. The site of the conference, at which over two hundred people are expected, will be the Olympic Arena.

The senior conference day will include three workshops on housing, health care, and legislation, and an afternoon political forum. Included in the workshops will be presentations on federal and state programs which effect services to senior citizens in northern New York counties, and opportunities for participants to question federal and state representatives of housing and health programs. The legislative workshop will include analysis of needed legislation at the state and federal level. Political candidates invited to the afternoon forum will be asked to endorse program changes associated with the areas of health, housing and income legislation.

The North Country Senior Coalition was formed by the vote of sixty-eight senior citizens, organization leaders, and agency representatives who assembled July 9, 1976 at Tupper Lake, to review issues that affect the well-being of the senior citizens of the North Country. The organizational meeting chose the arrangement of a fall conference day as an immediate step in responding to these problems in health care, housing and legislation.

Carl Eberhart, President of the New York State Senior Action Council, and resident of Cayton, New York, was chosen as chairman of the Coalition. The three final priorities for the conference day were selected by the steering Committee of the Coalition, which was also chaired by Eberhart. Assistance for the North Country Senior Coalition is being given by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, County Offices for the Aging, and community organization in six counties of Northern New York.

The housing workshop will be a major part of the conference day, with federal representatives of Farmers Home Administration and of Housing and Urban Development present. Representatives of the Health Systems Agencies, newly formed to supervise health policy and programs on a regional level, will address participants in the health workshop. This workshop will also examine on a county by county basis the need for homemaker services and the local responses to this need.

Additional information on the North Country Senior Coalition can be obtained care of Box 296 Ogdensburg, New York, York.

Senior citizen organizations and clubs will be directly contacted with additional descriptions of the Coalition and the fall conference day.

## NYPIRG raps Niagara Mohawk

### and PSC for rate increases

Residential customers of Niagara Mohawk will pay 5 to 10 percent more on their electric and gas bills if the Public Service Commission's Hearing Examiner's report is upheld by the full Commission this fall. According to Paul Hudson, staff attorney with the New York Public Interest Research Group, Inc., a consumer intervenor in the rate case, "While the PSC examiner reduced request from \$214 million to \$68 million, his ruling throws the highest burden on residential consumers. Small consumers will actually pay a larger increase than Niagara Mohawk requested, while small commercial rates will remain constant or increase less than 5 percent. Large industrial users will continue to pay significantly less than home-owners per unit of electricity."

Declining block rates, which charge customers less per unit of electricity the more they use, were continued. NYPIRG charged that declining block rates are both "anti-conservation" and "unfair to the poor, the elderly, and the careful consumers who use less but pay and the careful consumers who use less but pay more."

NYPIRG's position as explained by Hudson is that, "No rate increase was necessary at all if the PSC would implement basic conservation measures and stop underwriting the utilities' reckless expansion plans with ratepayers' dollars." Niagara Mohawk now has a reserve margin of 45 percent, or over one-fourth more power than is

presently needed by its customers. However, the company has announced plans to build still more power plants to handle its predicted future need. The projections of the New York State utility companies for large growth in electric consumption, projected by the utilities to double by 1991, has become a major point of controversy.

Consumer and environmental groups see the utilities' multi-billion dollar expansion programs as behind current rate increases, and dangerous to the environment. According to Mr. Hudson, "Taxing today's consumer to pay for highly speculative power plant construction is laying the groundwork for future rate increases."

NYPIRG presented testimony in the Niagara Mohawk case by Dr. Marvin Resnikoff which indicated that the utility has available substantial, additional hydroelectric power which costs less than 10 percent of nuclear energy produced electricity. Dr. Resnikoff charged that "Niagara Mohawk has plenty of cheap hydro power at existing facilities but would rather build the Sterling Nuclear Power Plant at over 15 times the cost." The PSC Examiner recommended that the utility produce its latest hydro power studies but denied NYPIRG's motion to bar the costs of the Sterling Nuclear Power Plant from being added to electric rates, pending the outcome of a hearing on Niagara Mohawk's idle hydro power plants.

The PSC Hearing Examiner also did not act on other consumer proposals which would have:

-Put a ceiling on executive salaries of \$100,000. The examiner's report stated that no evidence was presented which would indicate that salaries of over \$100,000 for Niagara Mohawk executives were "unreasonable."

-Stop the practice of reimbursing the utility for 100 percent of its rate case expenses through higher electric rates. These costs are presently about \$230,000 per year for Niagara Mohawk.

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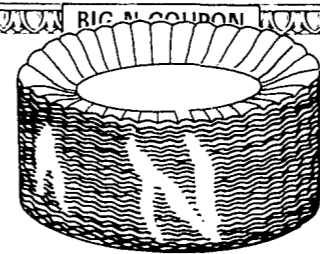


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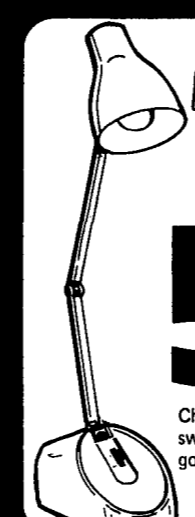
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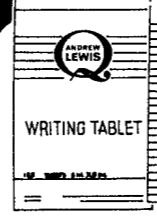


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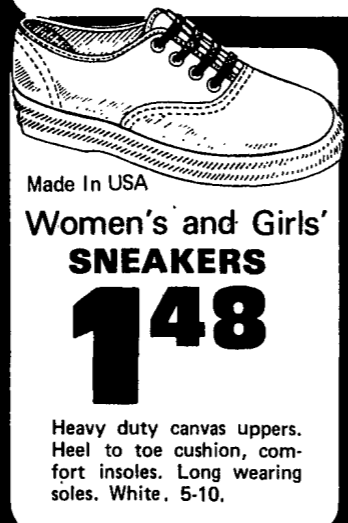
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