

editorials & commentary

Power Line Problems In Minnesota

Guerrilla warfare has come to Gopher Prairie. Gopher Prairie was the fictitious name used by author Sinclair Lewis to disguise the identity of Sauk Centre (his home town) in his novel, "Main Street" one of the great classics of American literature.

The book chronicled the placid life of a typical small Midwestern community in the early 1900s. But today much of that tranquility has been replaced by sabotage, violence, threats and highly emotional confrontations.

In a vain effort to maintain order, hundreds of State Patrol officers have been dispatched this year to this west-central Minnesota community as well as Lowry, Elrosa and other small neighboring towns.

Embittered farmers claim that their lives, their property and the safety of their families are being threatened. "These guys are crazy—they'll kill," says Gloria Woida, a former beauty shop operator and wife of a dairy farmer.

On the other side of the escalating dispute, two large cooperatives supplying power to much of rural Minnesota charge that shots have been fired at construction workers and guards and that equipment has been sabotaged and destroyed.

At the center of the bitter feud is a 425-mile-long, high-tension power line that begins near a mine-mouth, coal-fired power plant outside the town of Underwood in central North Dakota.

The line runs 170 miles through Minnesota, terminating near the community of Delano, about 30 miles west of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area in the state's southeastern corner.

The rural electric cooperatives building the transmission line, the United Power Association and the Cooperative Power Association, rejected the traditional practice of following township, section and property lines.

Instead, the line cuts diagonally across area

farms, requiring the construction of huge transmission towers, 150 feet high and 40 feet square at the base, in the midst of rich agricultural land.

Anguished farmers have seen their property cleaved and fear that the towers will pose serious problems for aerial crop dusting and for center-pivot mechanical irrigation systems that swing in wide circles.

Earlier this year, approximately 6,000 people staged a protest march against the line, after failing to halt construction through lobbying up state legislature and litigating right up to Minnesota's Supreme Court.

In recent months, they have turned increasingly to guerrilla warfare—cutting through tower bases with hacksaws, shooting at construction helicopters, placing sugar in the gas tanks of construction equipment and bending steel beams out of shape.

Disinterested observers suggest that the protesters probably could have forced a peaceful rerouting of the line if they had voiced their concerns at public hearings held early in the planning stages.

In addition, some of their allegations about the line's potential dangers—including fear of shock, ozone degradation, excessive noise and long-term biological effects—have an emotional rather than a rational basis.

But the cooperatives have been unnecessarily intransigent, determined to complete a project so unpopular that scores of formerly law-abiding citizens have turned to civil disobedience if not violence.

"The line is needed, it's going to be built and we're going to operate it," says one cooperative spokesman, typifying the uncompromising approach that has embittered area residents.

Mrs. Woida describes members of her family as "political prisoners"—a reference that may be exaggerated but which illustrates the sorry state of affairs in Gopher Prairie.

Public Channeling

If television has become the dominant mode of mass communication in our society, why shouldn't the public have the opportunity to use that medium to exchange information, debate ideas and share experiences?

Public participation in television programming is hardly a revolutionary notion. In fact, federal regulations require such "public access" in the approximately 4,000 communities throughout the country now served by cable television systems.

Yet the concept is being implemented only in a relatively few communities (precise figures are elusive but the best available estimates range from 200 to 400) because of public indifference, governmental ignorance and hostility on the part of operators of cable systems.

Under rules issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 1972, every community cable system is supposed to include a public access channel, available to all individuals and groups on a first-come, first-served non-discriminatory basis.

The only prohibitions apply to material promoting the sale of commercial goods or services, obscene or indecent matter or advertising on behalf of candidates for public office.

In scores of communities across the nation, public access programs have gained the respect and attention of the citizenry. Producers have ranged from artists and religious groups to the League of Women Voters and the Gray Panthers, a senior citizens' organization.

Volunteer coordination has been provided by equally disparate groups—the public library in Rome, Ga.; a church in Knoxville, Tenn.; the public school system in Irvine, Calif.; and the municipal government in Madison, Wis.

Some of the most successful public access operations are located in communities able to draw on the resources of major universities—East Lansing and Ann Arbor, Mich.; Palo Alto, Calif.; and Amherst, Mass.

Others have captured the public interest in York and Reading, Pa.; San Diego and San Rafael, Calif.; Worcester, Mass.; and Derby,

Conn.

The Reading operation has gained national acclaim for its programs serving senior citizens. In York, there are special programs for the deaf and the Spanish-speaking citizens as well as classes in parenting skills.

Several public access operations have successfully experimented with a format in which senior citizens and young people appear on the same program, with the older residents reminiscing life in the community in earlier years.

Public access supporters are organizing for the first time. At a meeting last month in Madison, Wis., they formed the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers. Later this month, San Diego's Community Video Center will act as host for a National Conference on Public Access Cable Television.

But there also are problems. Many communities with cable systems don't enjoy the benefits of public access because the city council failed to insist that language implementing the FCC regulations be included in the contract it signed with the system's commercial operators.

Those operators frequently are unwilling to give away a channel that could produce additional revenue if used commercially, notes David Korte of the Cable Television Information Center, affiliated with The Urban Institute in Washington.

Finally, a subcommittee of the House Commerce Committee is considering a complete revision of the Federal Communications Act that would eliminate all FCC jurisdiction over cable systems—including the weak regulations requiring public access.

"If we lose the federal minimum standards, we lose valuable leverage," argues Marta Peck, a leader of the New York, Pa. public access project.

If those difficulties can be surmounted, however, public access holds the promise of turning a nation of passive viewers into active participants, communicating with each other in a continuing community dialogue.

letters

More On Giannelli's 'PURagate' Probe

To the Editor:

We are entitled to be kept continuously informed about every aspect of all public matters. Unlike the local political and bureaucratic bosses, we are going to report immediately on any development in the Potsdam Urban Renewal Agency's continuing scandal. Unfortunately, bureaucrats can shield themselves behind the usual multiple barriers of red tape and even the friendly-sounding "Freedom of Information Act" seems to defy its name and to become, when imprudently placed in the hands of bureaucrats, just another pompous expression designed to protect such bureaucrats' negligence, errors, ineptitudes as well as, possibly, wasteful mismanagements and thefts of taxpayers' money.

You cannot just walk into a public office, maintained with your taxes, and just ask for a simple record, you know. On, no. You have to fill out an application which the friendly-sounding Renewal Agency can ponder upon for up to five days, and which can be denied because, among other things, the record represents "a confidential disclosure," or is part of "investigatory files," or is exempted by statute other than the Freedom of Information Act, or "Other, specify."

The intrepid taxpayer, at this point can appeal. Ingeniously enough, however, the appeal is rigged to be made to none other than the head of PURA who, seven days later, will confirm the denial previously issued by the same agency's head through the deceptively obedient lower bureaucrat.

Having survived the trials of the far more lethal Fascist bureaucracy in Italy, it is no problem for us to handle this little game with humor. So we filed an application to inspect the past and current records of PURA with its director, Mr. Juravich, whom finally we were able to find on Friday, Aug. 18, and we are prepared to file an appeal later with Ms. Thayer is needed. In the process we were also able to find out from the director that the famous check of \$1,003.33 fraudulently paid by PURA to the non-existent contractor "Harold Clark" is in the PURA files. We also know that the man who cashed the fraudulent check is still in the area, but, at this point, we find it inelegant for us to approach him. We would, however, be very understanding, and in the long run, very helpful to him if he chose to call us at 265-7000.

We in Potsdam in particular, may have to exercise a great deal of patience in this matter, and also a great deal of skill in dealing with the quicksands of bureaucracy. It took some time, as you recall, to solve Watergate, which after all, was just a little break-in, and not the cunningly-executed caper Puragate is. Time, patience and skill, with the determination of all the people, will surely solve Puragate too, however, and cleanse this town of all political corruption.

Waiting for the developments, for now we wish to thank all the beautiful people who expressed to us their support and encouragement to continue vigorously with the probe of this mysteriously unresolved PURA scandal.

Cordially yours, Dr. Steven Giannelli de Jannel

Gordon Daley Urges Talk Show Appearance

To the Editor:

On August 15th both Republican candidates for Sheriff of St. Lawrence County were invited to appear on WNYN's "Sounding Board" television program. The producer informed me that my opponent, Keith Knowlton, had declined the invitation.

According to an article appearing in the August 17th edition of the Ogdensburg Journal my opponent is quoted as stating "I don't want to go on and put my platform out yet...and have it torn apart by the opponents." The article also noted that it would be "sensible" for him to accept the offer before the primary.

In my opinion, my opponent's decision and refusal to appear on a TV program does a great injustice to the voters of St. Lawrence County. What better media is there for voters to see the candidates together and listen to their views?

This candidate has no "platform" to hide from the voters. I offer the residents of St. Lawrence County my 25 years of law enforcement experience, mature thinking but more importantly, the services of a proven leader and administrator. The taxpayer is entitled to efficiency, courtesy, and the best protection for his tax dollar. The Sheriff's department annual budget exceeds more than a half million dollars. A private corporation would employ the most qualified but many political campaigns look like popularity contests.

The voters of St. Lawrence County are entitled to review the qualifications of all candidates before the primary, and what better way than to see and hear them on television.

Gordon "Bud" Daley

At his salary of \$17,000-plus, we taxpayers feel with his recent performance of losing we are voting him out and if he goes with sports, so be it.

If the students were behind him and his program, they would have convinced and encouraged their parents to vote "yes."

If Rische is as talented as he told Kmacck he is, why isn't he coaching at the college level? Could it be they won't pay him what we suckers, sorry taxpayers, are paying him?

Why not demote or fire Rische and hire Thomas Cornea, a fine gentleman liked by both students, past students, and parents alike. Has Connors and tenure made this Rische Ripoff a death-dous part-or-retain deal? If so, our school is in the hands of the bureaucrats. Or do we taxpayers have a say?

Oh, by the way, Mr. Thomas Corneau lives in our school district and pays taxes here. Does Rische?

I played basketball with Jim as a sophomore and I made All-Northern and I can truthfully say that if he coaches anything like he played and using his own figures of 14 years and \$1.80 per hour, then he is \$1.78 overpaid.

Power to the people
Stephen C. Williams
RD 2
Madrid

PAT Seeks Answers From Legislators

To the Editor:

The letter below was presented last Monday by PAT members to the county legislature. Voters should try to attend these monthly meetings, as this is the time when next year's budget is being prepared. Opportunity exists for citizen participation, which can be effective. Perhaps as a result of our efforts, some expenditure plans were defeated or withdrawn last Monday, although in our opinion far too much was passed, particularly in the area of CETA, which is also OUR money.

In our opinion, the most significant action of the night, which was not even reported in any newspaper we saw, was newly-appointed legislator Joe Sovie's proposal to "recommmend to the Finance Committee that the county overall tax levy for 1979 be held at or below that for 1978." This was seconded by Al Rishes and sent to committee. When a Republican and a Democrat can combine to attempt to put a lid on spending, that is news, and offers a slim ray of hope for more responsive government and less bureaucratic spending.

To the St. Lawrence County Legislature:
PAT is circulating petitions to give New Yorkers the right of initiative, referendum and recall so that we can follow California's lead in tax limitation. We have found overwhelming support from most voters, and urge the Legislature to bear this in mind in considering raises, department restructuring, new construction or new programs. Specifically, we urge you to follow the people's desire to less government and lower budgets, with the following recommendations:

Do combine departments if total number of employees can thereby be reduced eventually and total operations conducted at lower cost.
Don't be so creative in declaring new positions or in creating new departments unless these are cost effective and will reduce our overall budget. Remember, even if dollars appear to come from Albany or Washington, they still come from our pockets and fuel inflation.

Consider the cost-effectiveness of the County Lab. What has it cost taxpayers over the past five years? What will it cost over the next five years? If the entire county is subsidizing a few districts, this is not fair.

We, and most of the public we have spoken to, are absolutely against construction of any new jail facilities in Canton or elsewhere. Renovate if necessary, but do not obligate our citizens to more taxes.

Fight Albany mandates with injunctions, etc., as has successfully been done elsewhere. We intend to read new legislation to be sure they are mandates. We're through taking anyone else's

Writer Blasts M-W Athletic Director

To the Editor:

When the Madrid-Waddington voters recently voted down the sports program in a special referendum, it wasn't because of the money, but innumerable other reasons, some of which are:

Athletic Director James Rische fails to obtain scholarships for his star players. He rules like Stalin with the staff his Gestapo agents. He harasses student he believes are drinking or smoking. He plays his pets while talent either sits on the bench or doesn't participate at all. The past athletes don't have any respect for him, but do say that he teaches fundamentals well. He doesn't lead by example, but instead is more: "Don't do as I do, do as I say."

At his salary of \$17,000-plus, we taxpayers feel with his recent performance of losing we are voting him out and if he goes with sports, so be it.

If the students were behind him and his program, they would have convinced and encouraged their parents to vote "yes."

If Rische is as talented as he told Kmacck he is, why isn't he coaching at the college level? Could it be they won't pay him what we suckers, sorry taxpayers, are paying him?

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Power to the people
Stephen C. Williams
RD 2
Madrid

Our 'Tendency For Mediocrity'

To the Editor:

Dear friends and neighbors, It seems now as things are developing that the Potsdam "Relief Route" is now virtually a matter of fact. I simply wish to state my disappointment that the village officials and people of my favorite town in the world are content to accept a third rate road as a solution to one of the mildest traffic problems in the United States.

And they're going to move the Depot. A child with Tinker Toys could design a road to go around it, but our esteemed civil engineers from DOT don't have the insight or respect for history to retain this monument of our past.

The Montgomery Ward parking lot has become more important, sacred, what-you-will than a functional and beautiful building. Great! That's Progress! Take a piece of the past, dislocate it for an overdesigned highway and celebrate our tendency for mediocrity. We should be proud.

Thanks for listening
Andy Welch

P.S. We are designing the village to accommodate something that didn't exist 100 years ago. Let's go back to designing things for people, not machines.

word for it.

We urge all legislators to vote only for a budget which is no higher than last year's. Inflation must be stopped or slowed. Next year is an election year, and we and the public will be watching each vote. We are convinced that there are thousands of dollars of fat in the county budget, and PAT will look at the budget and at all interfund transfers with that in mind. People are aware that the sales tax reaps government a bonanza in inflationary periods, so our taxes have been going up and up, regardless of what we see on our tax bills.

We wish to know if Carleton Doane was correctly quoted by the Watertown Times in reference to why Pensak's salary was paid when he wasn't working. Did he really say, "I don't think it's any of the public's business how he's being paid"? Do you, legislators agree with this statement concerning taxpayers' money? Do you believe someone who is ignorant of the public's legal right to making public expenditure is qualified to administer the public's business? We urge you to be informed about CETA. Time may be running out, the well running dry. Don't saddle us with a monster when outside funding is gone. A response to our questions is requested.

Potsdam Area Taxpayers, Inc.
By Order of Board of Directors

She Says Thanks

To the Editor:

I would like to express my personal thanks to Linda Albrecht, Mary Ellen Campbell, Tim O'Brien, Ed and Diane Boyd, Anne Holden Camera, and Betsy Friedel for all of their help and precious time which they devoted to making our tenth year reunion such an enormous success. I certainly couldn't have done it without you. And from all of us to our Classmates who attended, a great big thank you for coming!

Martha Hartle Cobane
Potsdam Class '68

From Our Files

1960-Notice-aching and burning feet specially treated, manicured and relieved. Please do not soak feet. Marys Holder, retired nurse, Hannawa Falls.

February, 1915-Sale of boys suits-100 boys suits for ages 10-18. Double-breasted coats, knickerbocker trousers. \$1.98-\$2.98. Goldsmith's.

1915-Whistel too quiet-The fire alarm siren which trustees have been investigating is not loud enough. It will not be kept.

April, 1915-New Normal assured-Gov. Wheaton signed a measure for a new Normal School. Assemblyman E.A. Everett can be credited with the bill. Bells were rung and further celebrations are planned when Everett returns from Albany. Dr. J.M. Thompson is principal.

February, 1915-The South Colton stage made a record-breaking trip last Tuesday and Wednesday. It left South Colton at 6 a.m. Tuesday and had reached Hannawa Falls Tuesday night. It remained there all night and got to Potsdam at noon. It took 17 hours running time for 14 miles.

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June, 1943-First contingent of soldiers arrives at Clarkson-Thursday p.m. 119 young enlisted men arrived to start training at Clarkson this summer. A total of 300 are expected. They are being fed in local restaurants until arrangements for meals in the civic center are made. The men are under the supervision of John Earl Jenner, proprietor of the Hotel Harrington and formerly operator of the Senate Restaurant in Washington, D.C.

Editor's Note: The following poem was submitted to the editor in memory of Richard Grover. The author wrote, "Please, sir, let Rich know we haven't forgotten him."

ODE TO RICH
When we lost Rich, we lost
More than we could bear,
With just one more look at you
We could prove just how
Much we do care.

If we could just see you
Face one more time
And the eyes that shined
So bright,
If we could only accept, that
In taking you
God truly was in the right.

Your expressions were unique
And your smile outshined
The sun.
And God, if you can hear
Us now, tell us why,
Why he had to be the chosen one.

We miss you Rich,
And think of you each day,
And when we lay our
Heads to rest
Us pray...

Dear Lord,
Please lead Rich to a
Better life
With a land all his own,
And stay right by his
Side, dear Lord
So, he'll never be alone.

We know we can't bring
You back
No matter how hard we try,
But remember, Rich,
When our day comes
We'll live together
In that great mansion
In the sky.

Kathy Mahoney

Courier & Freeman

A Park Newspaper

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The Courier and Freeman welcomes letters from readers. The writer must sign his or her name for publication and give a complete address and telephone number through which the letter can be verified. Names will be withheld by request at the discretion of the editor and only for good reasons. Letters should be typed and double spaced, if possible. If not, they should be neatly written, printed, double spaced. The Courier and Freeman reserves the right to condense and edit letters.

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We miss you Rich,
And think of you each day,
And when we lay our
Heads to rest
Us pray...

Dear Lord,
Please lead Rich to a
Better life
With a land all his own,
And stay right by his
Side, dear Lord
So, he'll never be alone.

We know we can't bring
You back
No matter how hard we try,
But remember, Rich,
When our day comes
We'll live together
In that great mansion
In the sky.

Kathy Mahoney

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