

Barclay Calls State School Aid A Geo-Political Issue

BY MIKE CLOONAN
CANTON — St. Lawrence County school districts with the exception of Colton-Pierrepont could expect to receive a 5 to 6 percent increase in state aid for the 1979-1980 school year which "goes along with Gov. Carey's proposed aid increases," State Senator H. Douglas Barclay told school board members and chief school administrators representing 17 of the 18 school districts in the county at a legislative breakfast here Saturday.

Barclay along with state assemblyman David Martin met with the school officials at the University Inn during the annual St. Lawrence County School Boards Association legislative breakfast.

According to Barclay, the issue of state aid increases to education is not a political issue between Democrats versus Republicans, but rather a "geopolitical" issue between New York City, Long Island, small city school districts and rural districts.

"It's where you're from when you determine just what increases your district will receive this year," Barclay

stated.

The state senator foresees approximately \$3.2 to \$3.5 billion that will be available to divide among school districts throughout the state. "The question is," according to Barclay, "how is the money going to be divided?"

Barclay stated, in his opinion, all St. Lawrence County school districts with the exception of Colton-Pierrepont would receive state aid increases for education.

C-P District Loses
 Under the governor's plan, Colton-Pierrepont would receive a 37 percent decrease in state aid. Barclay said the decrease probably would be very minimal, "more like 5 to 6 percent." Barclay said he supported the concept proposed by Gov. Carey, but there would have to be negotiations on the actual figures.

Barclay cited, for example, the situation between two school districts in his legislative district.

Under the governor's plan, the Oswego school district would lose \$1.4 million in aid while the Central Square

Central School District would receive an increase of \$1.4 million.

Distribution of state aid is also a problem in New York City, Barclay stated in which city officials are pressing for more and more dollars for education services.

Barclay also cited problems in Suffolk and Nassau counties with regard to state aid.

There is a great disparity in Suffolk County, for example. There is a fight going on within the county on how school district funding should be appropriated.

Small City Districts
 Small city school districts have their problems, Barclay stated, where they are up against constitutional property tax limitations.

Ogdensburg, classified as a small city school district, fortunately does not have as many problems as some of the small city school districts, such as Auburn, Barclay stated.

Transportation Aid
 Speaking on transportation aid, which the St. Lawrence County School Boards Association deems crucial, Barclay stated "transportation aid is one of the

prime areas to get cut, if they can get away with it."

Barclay remarked that in districts such as in St. Lawrence County, where there are numerous rural schools and students must be bused, transportation aid is vital, but legislators from downstate where students walk to school, view transportation aid as an area which could be cut.

BOCES Salaries
 The state senator commented that the stand that the St. Lawrence County School Boards Association takes that full BOCES salaries be aidable rather than the present \$9,500 figure is possible, but asked, "what are you going to give up?"

Currently, BOCES salaries below \$9,500 are aidable. There is a resolution in the state assembly, which if passed, would increase the aidable figure from \$9,500 to \$11,500.

Distribution Schedules
 Presently, state aid to school districts is distributed in eight one-third shares during the months of September, October, and November and 25 shares in

April, May and June.

This method forces school districts to borrow money in anticipation of state aid.

The St. Lawrence County School Boards Association recommends that legislation be adopted which would distribute aid evenly over a 10-month school year or 12-month period. In school year, the association supports a resolution in which state aid would be received for interest costs incurred by the school districts.

Barclay stated that the current payment schedule for state aid will not change, "because the governor has to balance the budget."

"The rollover method now used by the state to distribute state aid was devised years ago and that's the way we balance the budget. It's not right but that's the way it is," Barclay stated.

"Either the state has to borrow the money or you (the school districts) have to borrow the money, so it's you. I know it's a problem, but that's just the way it is," Barclay said.

Commenting on a statement that the New York State School Boards

Association supports that state aid for school districts be determined by April 1 of each year, Barclay remarked that the governor and legislators get the budget passed first, so the state can operate, and "then later tinker with it."

"My gut reaction is that once the budget is passed this year, there will be no additional supplemental aid to school districts."

Taylor Law
 "We must have done something right," Barclay stated in reference to the Taylor Law which provides penalties to striking public employees.

Currently, the Taylor Law provides a fine of one day's pay for each day a public employee strikes plus loss of pay for each day they don't work.

"The New York State United Teachers don't like it, school boards and school officials don't like it, so we must have done something right," Barclay stated about the Taylor Law.

"I am absolutely opposed to public employees striking and I think there should not be a law protecting them," Barclay stated.

County School Boards Association Lists Stances On Several Issues

CANTON — Representatives and administrators from 17 school districts in St. Lawrence County heard State Senator H. Douglas Barclay and Assemblyman David Martin address their opinions on several problems facing New York State school districts at Saturday's annual St. Lawrence County School Boards Association legislative breakfast held at the University Inn.

The only district not represented at the session was Morrisstown Central School.

Listed below are the issues discussed during the program and the viewpoints of the St. Lawrence County School Boards Association:

State Aid
 "State aid for education is obviously of critical concern to the school districts of St. Lawrence-Lewis Counties. In the North Country we have trimmed our budgets and cut staff, but we continue to receive minimum support based on the concept of 'save harmless' which does not provide equity funding of education.

"We do not presume to be able to develop a state aid formula, especially after the Levittown Decision and the resulting litigation now in the courts. Also, we are realistic enough to realize that none of the three main state aid proposals (Conference Board, Regents, and Governor's) will be accepted unaltered.

"Therefore, we urge our legislators to support aid to education on the scale of 49 percent state contribution and 51 percent local contribution as was the case in 1969. We also urge that they support more equitable distribution of aid and look especially hard at the special difficulties of our geographical area as it pertains to transportation aid.

"Present law specifies that part of BOCES employees salary exceeding \$9,500 is not an approved expense for state aid purposes. We recommend and will support strongly legislation which will allow the full salary of BOCES employees to be considered an approved expense for state aid purposes. We would support A2147 by Assemblyman Stavisky to increase the level from \$9,500 to \$11,500, but still feel that the full salary should be considered an approved expense.

Transportation Aid
 "Because of the large geographical area of the St. Lawrence-Lewis County school districts, transportation aid is especially critical. We feel that all items

of expense incurred in providing pupil transportation should be aidable and that the cap on this aid should be lifted. Also, we support any legislation that will provide for the inclusion of overhead and administrative costs as approved transportation expenses for districts operating their own transportation as is now included when districts contract for transportation.

"We support A2344 by Assemblyman Virgilio to require that the employer's retirement costs for all transportation employees be included as approved, state-aidable expenses for any school district furnishing transportation by means of district-owned vehicles. However, we feel that overhead and administrative costs should also be approved as state-aidable expenses.

State Aid for Preschool Handicapped
 "We recommend and would support legislation which would fully fund Early Intervention Programs, including, but not limited to preschool handicapped programs scheduled for state aid apportionments are received.

Aid for School Interest Payments
 "State aid is not distributed in 8 1-3 percent shares in September, October and November and 25 percent shares in April, May and June. Because of this payment schedule, districts are forced each year to borrow money in anticipation of state aid. We recommend that legislation be adopted which would distribute aid evenly over the 10-month school year or over a twelve month period. This would result in a great deal less borrowing and a decreased costs of interest which presently is not an aidable expense.

"We also recommend the passage of Senate Bill S744 sponsored by Senator Bruno which would pay state aid for the interest costs incurred by school districts because of the need to borrow until scheduled state aid apportionments are received.

State Aid Determination Deadline
 "We support the New York State School Boards Association effort to get the Legislature and the Governor to provide that state aid for school districts be determined by each April 1 for the following school year.

Taylor Law
 "School personnel, by the nature of their duties, hold a public trust. Any interruption in those duties by a strike betrays that trust and should be dealt with accordingly. We strongly support the 2 for 1 penalty and feel that employees on strike should suffer a penalty beyond the loss of a day's pay

for each day out. Likewise, privileges that come with the public trust, such as dues check-off, should be suspended after the strike as further penalty. We oppose any further weakening of the Taylor Law which in the past has provided a fair and equitable mechanism for both employer and employee to arrive at a just labor settlement. We strongly oppose the extension of the agency fee or the attempts to make it permanent and binding on all public employees.

"Also, we support S1776 by Senator Eckert to establish a system of three-to-five year reviewable, renewable contracts, rather than the lifetime tenure.

Mandates
 "We support legislation that would ensure that new program mandates established by legislation or by Commissioner's regulations would go into effect only after the Legislature had specifically appropriated the funds necessary to cover any operating cost increase that would result for the local school districts involved.

"We specifically support Assembly Bill 1312 which would provide that no future mandated programs or services could be imposed upon the elementary and secondary public schools unless completely funded by the state. We would recommend an amendment to that bill which would state that the funds appropriated for these new programs would not be deducted from any other aid category already being received by the school districts.

Unemployment Insurance
 "We recommend clear and concise legislation which will clear up the confusion in the courts over this issue. This legislation would specifically require the state to pay for the cost of unemployment benefits for qualified school personnel, specifically exclude substitute teachers from eligibility for unemployment benefits, and specifically prohibit noninstructional employees from collecting unemployment insurance while on vacation.

"We strongly support S1276 and A1744 which will clear up this confusion.

Increase In Fund Balance
 "Real Property Tax Law, Chapter 73 of the Laws of 1977, limits school districts to a 2 percent fund balance to operate until tax collection starts. Since school districts usually must expend funds for necessary expenses incurred

over the summer months in excess of the two percent of the previous year's budget, we support the New York State School Boards Association's attempt to seek an amendment to subdivision I of Section 1318 of the Real Property Tax

Law to increase the limit on surplus funds authorized to be retained by a school district from two percent to five percent.

Self-Insurance
 "We support and strongly urge the

Legislature to clear-up the confusion regarding self-funding insurance. We support this concept and recommend legislation which will not only permit this in the health and medical area, but in all insurance areas as well."



MEET WITH EPA — Margaret Weltzmann of Potsdam and Alice Norman of Edwards are shown here in the offices of the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, D.C. last week. With Diana Douglas, also of Potsdam, the two attended a conference sponsored by the Friends of the Earth on 2, 4, 5-T, silvex, and other toxic substances. (Diana Douglas photo)

Area Women Attend Herbicide Conference

BY BETSY BAKER
 Three North Country residents were among representatives from ten states who attended a conference on herbicides held in Washington, D.C. last week.

Alice Norman of Edwards, Margaret Weltzmann and Diana Douglas both of Potsdam attended the conference, called by Friends of the Earth to seek federal action on the use of 2, 4, 5-T, Silvex and other toxic herbicides. They were joined by representatives from the states of Washington, California, Ohio, Wisconsin, Alabama, Louisiana, West Virginia, Maryland and New York. Their trip was sponsored by Friends of the Earth, a national environmental organization.

The three have long been associated with protest activities against the 765 kv powerline and the use of herbicides for clearing powerline rights-of-way.

The Washington conference coincided with last Thursday's announcement by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that the agency was taking what it termed "emergency action" to halt the spraying of the herbicide 2, 4, 5-T in U.S. forests and along the routes of powerlines.

2, 4, 5-T, along with another herbicide known as Silvex, contain a trace contaminant called TCDD or Tetra-Dioxin, which came to national attention in a contaminant found in "Agent Orange," a defoliant used extensively in Vietnam, has been found to cause miscarriages and birth abnormalities in laboratory animals.

According to a statement by Deputy EPA Commissioner Barbara Blum, released at a press conference last Thursday, there is now evidence which links the use of 2, 4, 5-T to miscarriages in humans. The evidence is based on studies done in an area of Oregon where

2, 4, 5-T is used regularly.

The studies show what Blum called an "alarming correlation" between a high rate of human miscarriages and the spraying of 2, 4, 5-T in Oregon forests. The miscarriages were found to occur shortly after the herbicide had been used.

The EPA ban is "analogous to a temporary restraining order," according to Blum's statement. The manufacturers of 2, 4, 5-T also have the right to appeal the EPA's decision.

Locally, 2, 4, 5-T gained attention when an unmarked canister of Tordon, an herbicide made by Dow Chemical and containing 2, 4, 5-T, disappeared from the Canton farm of Kenneth Theobald in April 1977.

At that time the Power Authority of the State of New York (PASNY) had

been using the herbicide to clear the right-of-way for the 765 kv powerline, which crosses the Theobald farm.

Although use of the herbicide may have been discontinued later that spring due to runoff conditions, PASNY was granted permission to resume the use of the herbicide in July, 1977.

In September of that year, a memo obtained by the Courier and Freeman, and sent to area contractors for the powerline, stated that the contractors were "free to apply the herbicide until advised otherwise by the engineer."

PASNY has since reportedly discontinued the use of Tordon on its rights-of-way.

Niagara Mohawk Power Corp. has also reportedly used an herbicide containing 2, 4, 5-T for clearing along its rights-of-way.

Music Theater Plan Meets Mixed Reaction

BY PHAE MARY GRIFFIN
Student Interest
 Response to the plan for Music Theater North in Potsdam has been marked, in one sector, by a mixture of good-will hopes and mild apprehension.

Tommy Thompson, director of Music Theater at the Crane School of Music, who will head the professional company of directors, designers, musicians, and technicians of Music Theater North, expressed a desire to "bring quality entertainment to the area."

"I'm hoping this will be a stepping-stone between college-type and professional theater. We achieve that with a professional staff which creates an educational atmosphere that those involved in the program can learn from," he said.

The staff will include Donald Tull, a professional singer and director from New York, who was in the production of "Fiddlers on the Roof" with Zero Mostel on Broadway. There will be Jack and Virginia Frymier, past directors for the New York City Opera and Village Light Opera Group; and David Gately, who has directed companies in the Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera, and Lake George Opera Festival. Michael Grube, former technical director of the Opera Company of Boston, will be responsible for scenic design. Molly Maginnis, costume designer from New York, costumer for "All's Well That Ends Well," the Folger Theater, Washington, D.C., will be in charge of costumes.

Thompson explained "Support by the community will be the keynote to the success of the program. Monetary support is primary, but we need support in respect of people wanting to be involved as singers, dancers, and dancers. We'll need people who want to work as technicians and others who would work as seamstresses and tailors."

He continued, "I've no doubt that what we are going to give will be good. We need money to carry out the program, the participation of cast and crews, and the actual audience to view and support the program in this way. In my estimation, the seat as it is to have musicians and actors on stage."

Professor William Champney of the Drama Area at the State University

College said, "I think it will work. I think it is a super idea. I only wish the Drama Area had been involved during the past three years of planning."

When asked if students of Music Theater take many drama courses, Champney replied, "Over the past five years there has been a major increase. This year over percent of students taking Acting I were music majors."

Champney continued, "I wonder if St. Lawrence County and Potsdam have enough offerings to attract the tourism necessary to sustain such an ambitious undertaking. I hope so."

"I hope that the St. Lawrence Foundation for Youth Inc. has as its major objective the developing appreciation for the arts in the young people of the area."

He concluded, "I think this kind of program is an excellent laboratory for performing arts students to develop their craft. For a long time, I've been in favor of this kind of program that would offer exposure to students who are potential professionals in the performing field."

Head of the Drama Area, Professor

Dorothy Gmucs, said, "I think the idea is good. It seems unlikely that there are enough people, either living in the area, or passing through it to support such a venture."

"All available quality talent should be encouraged to participate with perhaps a few carefully selected guest artists. This might, to some extent, alleviate the financial situation."

Professor Clayton Horan observed, "Being my first year here, it is difficult for me to make any predictions. I've no idea if there is enough support to raise the \$60,000."

"Certainly it sounds like a good thing for the area. It will bring attention to Potsdam State as well as to Potsdam community."

"It will give our students something else to consider for the summer. It is an advantage, as part of their education, to work with as many companies as possible, whether actors or other professionals. It gives them insight into their craft—how good they are compared to other people."

"I wish them well in their venture."

Editor's Note: The following is another statement issued by the Potsdam village Republicans. In the interest of keeping our readers informed for the upcoming March 20 Village elections, we print it below:

"The democrat administration has recently characterized village finances as being in 'absolutely tremendous financial condition.' In view of the verified accounts that are in the red and the cut in federal Revenue Sharing and Anti-Recession funds this fiscal year, we find it difficult to understand the claim that the village budget will be balanced at year's end without using our reserves or without the need for property and sales tax increases for the coming year.

"The village administrator, in a January 1979 article in The Advance News supplement, discussed the prospects for the 1979-1980 budget by expressing concern that even if we limit expenditures to only our most crucial items and so-called 'mandated in-

Village Not Looking To Fill Positions

Potsdam Mayor Ruth Garner Tuesday morning denied that the village is seeking either a village clerk or a police commissioner.

Garner told the Courier and Freeman that the village has "no plans to create the position of police commissioner" and that there have been "no discussions" on the matter.

Garner also stated that the village has no plans to hire a village clerk.

Village Administrator Sanford Dewey also serves as village clerk. Garner said, at an annual salary of \$52. The position of village clerk is required by state law so that someone will be empowered to perform such duties as the signing of legal notices, according to Garner.

An advertisement seeking a village

clerk for a "small northern New York village" ran in the Dec. 6, 1978 issue of the Courier and Freeman.

A check Tuesday morning with Richard Wyslasing of the Buffalo-based firm of Value Management Consultants, the firm that placed the ad, revealed that the village referred to in the ad is not Potsdam, but Rouses Point, N.Y.

Wyslasing said that while a number of responses to the ad were received from Potsdam, no one from Potsdam was recommended for the post. He noted that Rouses Point was seeking a clerk-administrator for that village.

The questions concerning a village clerk and a police commissioner were raised in a letter to the editor in this week's Courier and Freeman. The letter was written by Republican Trustee Candidate Eleanor Senf.

As in every family discussion, there are more requests for new expenses than there are expectations for new income. Everyone seems to have a new idea on how to spend taxpayers' money. When the taxpayers' standard of living is shrinking, elected officials must tell those who want more tax dollars that the golden goose has flown south."

Village Republicans Question Openness About Present Finances

creases, our overall operating expenses will increase. In the face of ruinous, double-digit inflation and the curtailment, if not actual loss of federal monies, it will indeed be a pleasant surprise to see a balanced budget in 1979-80. And, surprise will give way to astonishment if this feat is accomplished without any tax increases whatsoever.

Proper Use Of Federal Funds
 "What kind of financial wisdom calls for the use of federal funds to pay for ongoing salaries and current operating expenses? When these funds are stopped or curtailed, the taxpayers must make up the shortfall in order to cover these bare necessities.

"Village government needs to find responsible and substantive methods to decrease spending and lessen our tax burden. Guidelines should be established for scrutinizing requests for more services in the context of our

ability to pay for them out of locally-generated revenue sources (such as an increased tax base) and without total reliance on federal funding sources.

"Proponents of such 'meataxe' approaches as Proposition 13 in California—as endorsed by Democratic Governor Jerry Brown—never tell us how to cut spending nor do they confront

the issues of real economy in specific terms and tell us exactly how to reduce inefficiencies. If the village hopes to avoid Proposition 13 fever and a taxpayers' revolt against unwarranted spending, then village officials should act responsibly and share with us their secret, classified information on how and where they intend to economize.

PURA Approves Contract For Design Services

A contract for design and supervision of the Second Urban Renewal site improvements project was approved by the Potsdam Urban Renewal Agency at a meeting held last Tuesday night.

The agency approved a contract for \$30,900 with Tisdell Associates of Canton. Of that total, \$15,900 is for basic engineering services and an additional \$15,000 is for special services such as topographic maps and the services of a resident inspector, according to Agency

Chairman Norma Thayer.

Bids for the site improvements project are expected to be let in time for the spring construction season, Thayer said. The work includes some underground services on Waverly Street, the rest of the Munson and Broad Street extensions, closing off Riverview Drive, design and improvements to Ives Park and work on downtown sidewalks.

The first site improvements project

was completed last year.

At last Tuesday's meeting, Thayer responded to statements made by Republican trustee candidates Ray Schwenke and Eleanor Senf in a position paper released to local news media.

In the position paper the candidates asked for a full accounting of Urban Renewal matters.

In her response Thayer stated that the Agency has given such an accounting,