

## Ruckus Over Rail Crossings Recalls Earlier City/County Standoffs

**BY BETSY BAKER**

It was almost like the old days last week in the Potsdam Town courtroom, the days when the people of St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties crowded similar rooms to hear why PASNY had to take their land to build its extra high voltage powerline.

Oh, the issue was different, the closing of a couple of railroad crossings instead of the building of a giant powerline, and there were fewer people, 25 maybe, instead of a couple hundred.

But the confrontation was still there, the clash of city vs. country ideas and ideals, the pinstripe suits vs. the hunting jackets and workboots, and if you closed your eyes it could have been the Power Authority talking instead of the State Department of Transportation.

their homes.

Laurie Potts spoke at last week's hearing. With her husband Ed she lives on the Adams Road; their property is traversed by the railroad tracks and the closing of the crossing would cut their property almost in half.

Mrs. Potts told Judge Bernard Heller that if the crossing is closed she and her husband will have no way to get to their woodlot to cut wood.

"We are 100 percent dependent on wood heat," Mrs. Potts said, adding that their fields would be "inaccessible" after the closing.

And Mrs. Potts contended that local residents will not benefit from the closing.

"The aluminum companies (in Massena) and ConRail, that's who will benefit," she said. "You're taking



**VOWS TO FIGHT** — Laurie Potts and her husband have vowed to fight the proposed closing of this railroad crossing near their farm on the Adams Road. The state Department of Transportation wants to close the crossing, but the

Potts say that would cut their land in two. They were joined at a hearing last week by several other area residents opposed to the closing of the Adams Road crossing and another crossing on the Dayton Road. (Hal Stokes photo)

### Does the state exist for the people, or do the people exist for the state?

What the DOT wants is to close two railroad crossings in the Town of Potsdam, one on the Adams Road and one on the Dayton Road. Last week the DOT held public hearings on the proposed closings before an administrative law judge hired by the DOT.

The DOT offered expert testimony from its regional rail coordinator Edgar Hoose of Watertown; Hoose was cross-examined by DOT attorney William Dwyer, Albany. Other DOT officials from Albany were also on hand, as was a ConRail official. The proceedings were recorded by a court reporter.

The Adams Road hearing began at about 9:30 a.m. and consumed more than six hours, with Hoose's testimony taking some three and a half hours. During his testimony residents of the road and others interrupted to ask if they would be given a chance to speak as well.

The DOT says safety is the primary reason for the proposed closings; the two local crossings are among 22 along Conrail's St. Lawrence and Jefferson County line that are slated to be closed.

**Viewed As Interference**

But the people who live along the Adams Road and the Dayton Road see it differently, and like the people who spoke out against the 765 KV line, these people see the DOT's action as interference and a threat to their chosen way of life.

They fear the closing will mean the Town of Potsdam will abandon the road and they cited both inconveniences and possible hazards if they are left with only one way out from

from little people, poor people who've worked hard, and you're giving it to multimillion dollar corporations. I don't even get a free box of tin foil."

Mrs. Potts said her property would be devalued by the closing, noting that she and her husband had planned in the future to sell building lots across the railroad tracks. And she said that if they add more beef cattle to the small number they now have, they will need the land across the tracks to graze their cattle.

Cars, trucks and school buses would have to turn around at the tracks after the closing, likely on Mrs. Potts' property, she said.

Another resident of the Adams Road, Patrick Arduine, told Judge Heller that his family had at one time owned most of the land along both sides of the road. Arduine said one reason why there has not been more development along the road is that his family sought for many years to preserve its rural nature.

Arduine, who has lived on Adams Road all his life, also cited problems with bus transportation for school children and noted that residents of the road would have only one way out if the crossing is closed.

**Data Is Questioned**

Town councilman Cecil Moore criticized the DOT for holding the hearings during the day when most working people would be unable to attend. The Potsdam Town Board is on record opposing the closings.

Moore also questioned some of the DOT's data, noting that Hoose had said "primary" fire response for the Adams Road would come from Union-

ville. A major fire would very likely require more equipment and manpower than the Racquette River fire company, based there, has available.

Moore said the DOT did not recognize that most rural fires are handled through mutual aid; the crossing closing would delay fire trucks responding from Potsdam and Norwood, according to Moore.

Francis (Bill) Healey, a town resident and candidate for the St. Lawrence County Legislature, also criticized the daytime scheduling of the hearing, calling it an "orchestrated conspiracy" between the DOT and ConRail.

Mary Ellen Hooper, a resident of the adjacent Pleasant Valley Road, told Judge Heller the Adams Road sometimes offers the only way out in the winter when steep grades at both ends of the Pleasant Valley Road are too icy to drive.

The DOT offered some compelling

reasons why the crossings should be closed.

Hoose said there is little traffic on the Adams Road, too little to justify spending \$80,000 to \$100,000 on flashers and automatic gates. He said gates and flashers would be installed on the Pleasant Valley Road crossing, where there is more traffic. Maintenance costs about \$3,000 annually, Hoose said.

The local effort is part of a statewide crossing safety program; federal funds available to the DOT will pay 90 percent of the cost of gates and flashers.

Hoose also said the ConRail line through the county, the only line connecting Syracuse with Montreal, was selected for safety improvements because \$17.4 million has already been spent on improvements to rail surfaces, ties and switches designed to allow trains to travel faster.

Trains passing the Adams Road

crossing will still travel at 30 miles per hour, however, DOT officials said.

Hoose said there are three houses and one active farm on Adams Road between Route 56 and the crossing. He said the DOT's studies indicate that response time for fire and rescue vehicles is much the same when those vehicles travel the Pleasant Valley Road to reach the Adams Road.

Hoose told the Courier Monday that once a hearing has been held it "forces the hand of the state" to do something — either close the crossing or install safety devices. Judge Heller, who must render a decision on both proposed closings, has asked for additional information on the Dayton Road crossing, Hoose said.

The judge, the DOT officials and the court reporter have moved on and the people are waiting for the outcome of the hearing.

They may feel that although they made their point — sometimes elo-

quently — last week, no one was really listening.

They talked about heating with wood, haying on their fields, grazing their cattle, needing another way out in the winter when one road is impassable, wanting to continue to live on land that has belonged to their families for generations or moving to the country to live a different kind of life.

The DOT talked about safety and about how much it would cost to install safety devices at every crossing.

Privately one DOT official said: "This isn't the first crossing we've closed and it certainly won't be the last." And the same official remarked on how much it costs ConRail every time a train has to slow down at a crossing.

Laurie Potts asked a question that never got answered last week — "Does the state exist for the people or do the people exist for the state?"

### Prof Wants To Find Out

## Is Potsdam Ready For This Electric Car?

What has a cruising speed of 55 miles per hour, works without gas and can be found in Potsdam? If your answer was an electric car, then you guessed correctly.

The vehicle will be introduced to Potsdam by Professor Behruz N. Sethna, the area coordinator of Management and Marketing in the School of Management at Clarkson College. Professor Sethna, working under a grant from the Department of Energy, will be conducting a marketing study on electric vehicles beginning this week.

During the next few months, he will drive the car on a daily basis through Potsdam in all kinds of weather to get area residents familiarized with the automobile. School of Management students Brian Maxwell, Thomas Seguin, David Pugliese and Jeff Ruhland will assist the Clarkson professor to see if the car can perform under normal conditions and what potential consumers think about such factors as price, operating costs, engine starts and pollution. This project actually began two years ago when questionnaires were distributed to people who worked and/or lived in Potsdam to determine how they felt about electric cars.

Electric vehicle manufacturers say that over 52 percent of this country's crude oil supply is being used by cars with internal combustion engines. If just 15 percent of the cars on the road today were electric, they predict, over one million barrels of oil each day would be saved.

When comparing the electric and conventional vehicle, the major difference is that an electric motor takes the place of a gas engine and batteries replace the fuel tank. Instead of going to a gas station to fill up, the driver plugs the car into a 220-volt outlet overnight for about eight hours. Professor Sethna notes however that in its present state, the electric vehicle won't take the place of a regular automobile. "It should be used," he said, "as a small second car for shopping and short distance commuting."

### DR. STEVENSON COMMENDED

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** — Dr. Marshall L. Stevenson of Potsdam has maintained a quarter century of membership and service in the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) — the nation's largest medical specialty organization.

In a letter to the family doctor, the then AAFP President Sam A. Nixon wrote, "Because of the activities of the Academy and busy individual physicians like you, family practice has made incredible strides. In fact, this growth has been unparalleled in the history of medicine."

Dr. Stevenson has long served as medical officer for the Town of Potsdam.



**ELECTRIC CAR** — Clarkson professor Behruz Sethna sits at the wheel of the experimental electrically-powered automobile on loan to the college for testing and study.

The car will be on local roads for several months. (Bill Short photo).

## Moose Spied Near Sevey's Corners

A moose recently sighted near Sevey's Corners in St. Lawrence County brings a spate of reported sightings in the Adirondacks closer to the Potsdam area.

"Moose are still present in northern New York," according to Environmental Conservation Commissioner Robert F. Flacke. At least four and perhaps five moose were seen roaming the Adirondack Mountains and foothills this past spring, summer and early fall.

Flacke said, "It is believed these are the same animals that migrated across Lake Champlain from Vermont in 1980. These rare movements began in June and continued through early October. Last year several dozen big game hunters observed moose tracks while others caught glimpses of the animals eating, walking and running through dense forest cover. Fortunately none were mistaken for deer and all survived the northern New York hunting seasons."

Moose once occurred throughout the northern United States and were among New York's wildlife until the mid-1800's. The disappearance of moose from New York was attributed

to changes in habitat, principally conversion of forest to agricultural land, and subsistence hunting by early settlers. Attempts to reestablish moose in the Adirondacks in the late 1800's and early 1900's were unsuccessful. Since 1950, approximately 20 moose have been reported wandering in the Adirondacks. Most of these animals vanished without notice; however, some were known to have been killed.

Recent sightings of three cows and two bulls have been reported separately in the following areas: Clinton County near Redford, Franklin County between St. Regis Falls and Loon Lake, Hamilton County between Indian Lake and Sepulcrator, Herkimer County near Old Forge and St. Lawrence County near Sevey's Corners. No additional moose were observed crossing Lake Champlain and no reported sightings of calf moose were made.

Despite their appearance, wandering moose are harmless and pose no real threat to people. Although moose resemble deer, their darker hair and larger size make moose easily recognized. As a further incentive to be careful, hunters are reminded

moose are completely protected. Anyone convicted of killing a moose can be subjected to a maximum fine of \$2,000 and a year in jail.

Flacke concluded by saying, "The Bureau of Wildlife offices at Ray Brook, Cortland, Warrensburg and Watertown are continuing to monitor the travels of these animals." People are encouraged to call wildlife personnel and report their observations.

### Emergency Aid Section

#### Feature Of Phone Book

A new "Emergency Care Guide" section and a 10-page listing of New York Telephone tariff excerpts are among the features in the 1981 Potsdam telephone directory now being distributed.

About 13,000 copies of the new phone book will be sent to customers in the Potsdam area between now and the end of the month, according to company manager Al Simpkins.

Simpkins said the Potsdam phone book contains about 32,500 listings in its 140 white pages and more than 2,900 in its 68 Yellow Pages.

## Another Cow Found Rabid; 20 People Require Treatment

Yet another report of a rabid cow in Potsdam has again called attention to the rabies outbreak in St. Lawrence County.

The New York State Health Department and the office of St. Lawrence County Health Services say that the latest two cases of rabies reported in the county were the cow, and a dog from the town of Hermon. These two domestic animals resulted in 18 to 20 additional human exposures now beginning post-exposure rabies treatment. So far, the total number of human exposures to rabies in St. Lawrence County is over 40.

Treatment of 18 to 20 persons within 24 hours last Wednesday exhausted the supply of human rabies immune globulin at the Canton-Potsdam Hospital, made available through the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators and the New York State Health Department. Through the cooperation of other hospitals and the State Health Department and with the assistance of the New York State

Police, additional supplies were obtained from Massena, Watertown, Albany, and Plattsburgh.

The Health Department again emphasizes the importance of vaccination of domestic pets and cautions farmers to be alert for any abnormal behavior in their livestock. Contact with any animal, wild or domestic, which is exhibiting abnormal behavior should be avoided.

The outbreak of rabies in animals has continued to spread with positive cases reported from the towns of Canton, Pierrepont, Russell, Potsdam, Dekalb, Lawrence, Norfolk, Madrid, and Hermon. The species reported as rabid include: three skunks, 27 foxes, two horses, four cows, one bat, one cat, one goat, and one dog now totaling 40 positively diagnosed cases in St. Lawrence County during 1981.

The Health Department expects that the outbreak will continue to spread, considering the high population of foxes and skunks in St. Lawrence County this year.

## Indictment Believed Filed Against Marty Cleary, Shooting Victim

**CANTON** — Martain Cleary, the victim of a Sept. 25 shooting, has apparently been indicted in connection with the incident, and the man who pulled the trigger has been cleared, it was learned last week.

A St. Lawrence County Grand Jury, according to unconfirmed reports, has returned a sealed indictment against Cleary, 36, 28 Sisson St. At the same time, the grand jury returned one "no bill," which means there was not enough evidence to warrant further prosecution.

The "no bill" was believed to have involved Walter Paul, 28, of the Sylvan Falls Road, Parishville, who, according to reports, may have acted in self-defense in connection with the shooting at his home.

Cleary remains in critical condition at Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse.

County District Attorney William Power Jr. declined comment when contacted by a reporter this morning, "We are not disclosing anything," Power said.

Cleary received a shotgun wound to the abdomen last month at Paul's residence, reportedly over a dispute concerning their jobs. Paul was Cleary's supervisor, and they worked for the New York State Division for Youth in the rehabilitation unit at the Hogsburg office.

No motive for the shooting has been

disclosed by police, although some reports indicate that self-defense may have been involved.

Cleary, according to reports, had a pistol in his possession at the time of the shooting.

The grand jury received evidence in the case last month.

### Water, Sewer Rates Slated For Increase

A plan to raise village water rates by 25 cents and sewer rates by 18 cents will be aired at public hearings Nov. 9 in the Potsdam Civic Center.

Comments on the proposed water rate hike will be heard at 7 p.m., on the sewer rate hike at 8 p.m. in the board room.

Users presently pay \$1.17 per 1,000 gallons for water; that figure would jump to \$1.40. Sewer rates are presently 92 cents per 1,000 gallons; that figure would be \$1.10.

Passage of a local law would be required to raise the rates. The local law would go into effect Jan. 1, 1982.

Village officials say the increase is needed to finance the new water filtration plant now under construction.