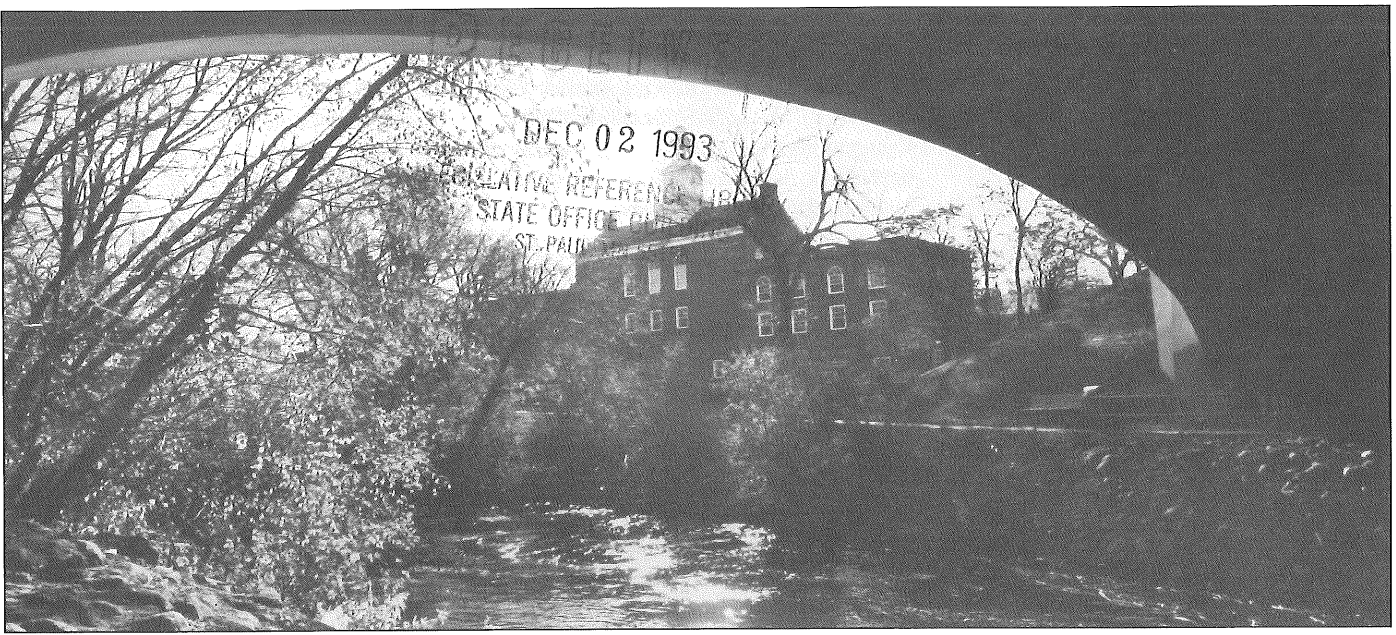


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MINI-SESSION REPORT

Minnesota House of Representatives ♦ November 30, 1993 ♦ Volume 2, Number 2



The picturesque Fergus Falls City Hall sits on the bank of the Otter Tail River which flows through the heart of the city.

Minnesota Plains Public Forums . . .

Fergus Falls, St. Cloud share legislative limelight



Fergus Falls and St. Cloud were the sites of the Minnesota Plains Public Forums Oct. 27-29. It was the Minnesota House of Representatives' 11th legislative mini-session since 1987, the year House members began taking legislative business outside the confines of the Capitol in St. Paul.

At an end-of-session press conference, Speaker-designate Irv Anderson (DFL-Int'l Falls), termed the mini-session "the best that there has ever been" or "at least equal to those that have been.

"Attendance has just been phenomenal," he said. "More than 3,000 people have attended our committee meetings and our town meetings. So, in terms of interest, it's there," he said.

The difference between this mini-session and the others was the fact that it took place in locations that were separated by a distance of more than 100 miles.

The first half of the session was spent in Fergus Falls, a city of about 12,500 people. The city, located 50 miles east of Fargo/Moorhead, is Otter Tail County's county seat. Five scenic lakes are within its limits, and there are more than 1,000 lakes in the county.

House members and staff traveled to St. Cloud for the second half of the session. The city of more than 49,000 people is set in the middle of the state along the banks of the

Mississippi River, only 65 miles from the Twin Cities.

Similar events were held in each area: town meetings in high school auditoriums; members and local residents paired for dinner and a chance to talk; official welcome luncheons; tours of local points of interest; and two dozen public forums, 12 in each area.

This issue of the *Mini-Session Report* centers on the high points of those public forums as well as other events. Topics considered during the three days included dairy pricing, ethics, human services issues, the merger of postsecondary education systems, education funding, graduation requirements, property taxes, workers' compensation, MinnesotaCare, Medicare supplement coverage, jail capacity, landfill cleanup, Minnesota's annexation law, and housing.

In Sartell, a city located just outside of St. Cloud, the House Capital Investment Committee organized a citizen panel that focused on bonding decisions legislators likely will face during the upcoming session. The four-hour session provided residents the opportunity to become stand-in legislators and to feel the pressure that accompanies such a position.

"The people are genuinely interested in their state government. They have shown that by their attendance and . . . the number of questions that they have asked," said Anderson.

Rep. Gil Gutknecht (IR-Rochester) agreed with Anderson, calling the Minnesota Plains Public Forums a "tremendous success."

Gutknecht quoted an expression that appears in Latin above the front desk in the chamber of the Minnesota House of Representatives: "Vox populum est vox dei," or "The voice of the people is the voice of God." He said that it's important for the "people's House" to come out to places like St. Cloud and Fergus Falls and hear from "regular people."

Anderson said, "We expect to continue the tradition of holding mini-sessions in the years to come, and if they're as successful as this one, I'm sure many people of the state of Minnesota will be very pleased."

Session Weekly renewal

Most of those who receive this issue of the *Mini-Session Report* also received the *Session Weekly* during the 1993 Legislative Session. If you would like to continue to receive the *Session Weekly* during the 1994 Legislative Session, which begins on Feb. 22, 1994, please complete and mail the form that appears on the inside back cover of this issue.



AGRICULTURE

Milk pricing skirmish

ALBANY — Despite his best efforts, former President John F. Kennedy, it is said, was never able to grasp the complexities of the federal milk pricing system.

Now, 30 years later, Minnesota dairy farmers seem just as confused with federal and state dairy pricing policies following a series of complex lawsuits.

At issue in Minnesota is whether state dairy farmers will reap some more of the benefits of a law approved, and subsequently ruled unconstitutional, that was intended to help dairy farmers.

Between 150 and 200 farmers crowded into the Sands Restaurant in Albany Oct. 28 to voice their frustrations and confusion over recent legal developments.

The 1993 Legislature approved a measure that required milk wholesalers to pay 2.25 cents into a fund for every 1 cent milk prices dropped below the \$13.20 per hundred-weight federal target price. The first assessment raised about \$2.5 million, which was distributed among the state's 13,500 dairy farmers this past spring.

But on Oct. 20, a U.S. District Court judge in Minneapolis imposed a temporary injunction against the assessments. Judge David Doty ruled in favor of three Minnesota bottlers who sought the injunction. The bottlers contended, and Doty agreed, that the law is unconstitutional because it interferes with interstate commerce.

Now it's unclear whether any of the additional \$1.1 million collected in September will ever be distributed to farmers. In addition, the October assessment was canceled because of Doty's decision.

Agriculture Committee Chair Rep. Steve Wenzel (DFL-Little Falls) said the legal ambiguities may be clarified in the near future when the appeals of a similar law in Massachusetts law are resolved.

The U.S. Supreme Court is scheduled to hear that case in February — the first time the high court has heard a dairy-related issue brought by a state since 1935. Wenzel said he was reasonably confident that appeal would be upheld. If so, Minnesota's law might also eventually be ruled constitutional, he said.

Meanwhile, the legal debate continues over the federal milk pricing system, which Midwest dairy farmers argue is slanted in favor of producers from the southern United States.

Last month, a federal court judge in Minneapolis finally heard arguments in Minnesota producers' long-standing lawsuit against

the United States Department of Agriculture over its milk marketing orders. District Court Chief Judge Diane Murphy's ruling is expected sometime in November.

Several farmers in attendance, however, said milk prices — not milk legal issues — should remain the top priority.

"What we need is price. We cannot live on promises," said Erwin Hildebrandt, a Kensington, Minn., dairy farmer and president of the Pope County Farmers Union.

Bill Dropik, a Nelson, Minn., dairy farmer and president of the Minnesota Milk Producers Association, added: "Every day that goes by we lose three more dairy farmers [in Minnesota and Wisconsin]. . . We need all the help we can get."

Farm Advocate Program

FERGUS FALLS — Financial distress stemming from 1993's floods and resulting poor crops may only be the tip of the iceberg for many Minnesota farmers. Now comes time to repay 1993 operating loans, then to try to figure out a way to secure new operating loans next spring.

All together, that spells a tremendous amount of emotional stress for farmers as well, experts agree. So members of the House Agriculture Committee were told Oct. 27.

Now, when farmers may need help most, one key Minnesota program remains critically underfunded. The lack of funding threatens the program's ability to provide a host of services to deal with this season's emotional distress.

Established in 1984, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Farm Advocate Program provides such services as financial counseling to farmers, referrals for stress manage-

ment, substance abuse, and suicide prevention.

It's the rise in calls concerning suicide that worry the 14 farm advocates throughout the state. So far this year, advocates have spent about 1,000 hours reaching 950 flood-ravaged farmers, and numbers could increase dramatically in the coming months. All this at a time when the program has \$13.95 available in its general fund to continue operating, according to program administrator Pat Schuna.

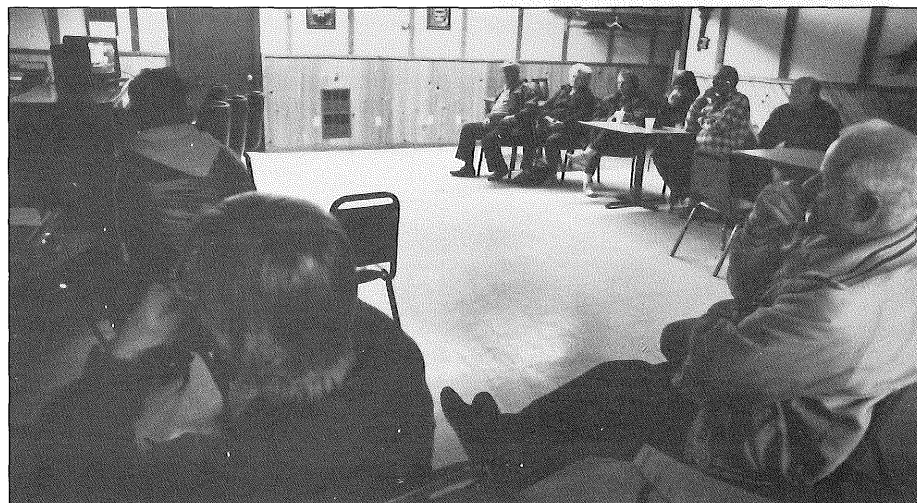
Another \$3,000 in discretionary funds will only keep the program afloat another month, Schuna told legislators. That's disturbing since there is expected to be an "astronomical increase" in calls for help this winter and next spring, Schuna said.

For example, if even 10 percent of the estimated 38,000 Minnesota farmers affected by the flood ask for help, that's another 3,800 cases for already overworked advocates, Schuna noted.

So Schuna requested \$175,000 in emergency funds from Gov. Arne Carlson early in October to keep the program running through the end of the year, but no decision had been reached by the end of October. However, she said she was "confident" the governor and Legislature would eventually approve the request for emergency funds.

Meanwhile, \$47,000 remaining from a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant for mental health counseling, plus \$50,000 of a \$100,000 donation from Taiwan for Minnesota flood victims, should keep the program running for a little while, she said.

How is the program preparing to deal with the expected increase in demand on its services this winter and spring? asked Rep. Roger Cooper (DFL-Bird Island).



An overflow crowd watched the House Agriculture Committee on closed circuit television in the basement of the Sands Restaurant in Albany, Minn. The committee met upstairs to hear farmers' concerns about dairy issues.

Schuna said she is going to request permission for emergency deficit spending from the governor. She said she has also requested a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to continue operating, and she said she hoped to be able to increase the number of farm advocates from 14 to 25 or 30 by next spring to deal with farmers' problems.



ARTS

Arts funding

ST. CLOUD — Toward the end of a long hearing where members of central Minnesota's arts community extolled the virtues of bringing artists into the schools, Juliana Elchert of St. Cloud rose from her chair and asked to be heard.

In an emotional tone, she told members of the House Economic Development, Infrastructure and Regulation Finance Committee that she thought it was "patently unfair" that such state-funded artist programs are available in public schools but not at private, religious ones.

"I would like to ask you to talk to the Minnesota State Arts Board [to find out] what the reasoning is," said Elchert.

Members and staff were unable to provide a ready answer at the Oct. 29 meeting held in the Stearns County Administration Center, but committee chair Jim Rice (DFL-Mpls) told Elchert that she raised "a very profound question. I think you deserve answers."

In short, the United States Supreme Court has, through several court decisions concerning the separation of church and state, generally limited government funding of religious schools to paying transportation costs and the purchase of secular textbooks.

"There's not a hard and fast line . . . but the court generally does prohibit direct funding to parochial schools," explained Andy Tourville, an assistant state attorney general who advises the Minnesota State Arts Board on such issues.

He said a series of U.S. court decisions have been careful to draw a line between public and religious schools so there is no confusion, or "entanglement," between the two.

"Nothing we have said can be construed to disparage the role of church-related elementary and secondary schools in our national life. Their contribution has been enormous," stated the court in its 1971 *Lemon v. Kurtzman* decision.

" . . . [But] the Constitution decrees that religion must be a private matter for the

individual, the family, and the institutions of private choice, and that while some involvement and entanglement are inevitable, lines must be drawn."

And while that decision and others are based on the U.S. Constitution, the Minnesota Constitution takes an even stronger stance on the separation of church and state, said Tourville.

"In no case shall any public money or property be appropriated or used for the support of schools wherein the distinctive doctrines, creeds or tenets of any particular Christian or other religious sect are promulgated or taught."

Tourville added, however, that the law on this issue is continually in flux. Just recently the court held that public funds could be used to pay for a deaf interpreter in parochial schools.

Whatever the state policy on the issue, Elchert said she intends to move ahead with her grant request for \$600 from the Central Minnesota Arts Board, which receives funds from the Minnesota State Arts Board.

She said she hopes to bring an African dancer-musician-storyteller to her school at about the same time he comes to perform at St. Cloud State University. While \$600 may not seem like a lot of money to some, it is to her pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade school, she said.



BONDING

Stand-in legislators

As a group of St. Cloud area citizens posing as "legislators for a day" struggled to assemble recommendations for the state's capital budget, they learned first hand what it's like to be lobbied.

The stand-in legislators found themselves besieged by "lobbyists," who were actually real-life legislators representing the needs of assorted state agencies.

The citizen panel was organized by the House Capital Investment Committee as an exercise in democratic decision-making. The session took place in Sartell, Minn., Oct. 29.

The panel's recommendations for \$403 million in state spending for a variety of building projects came very close to their imposed limit of \$400 million. And while some members enjoyed "throwing all this money around," most said they wouldn't want responsibility for making the real decisions.

A vote of the panel members showed they placed the highest priority on higher educa-

tion needs, with K-12 education coming in second, and deferred maintenance third.

But while the meeting took place close to St. Cloud State University (SCSU), the panel did have an extensive debate before approving SCSU's \$34 million request for a new library and a central chiller facility to serve the library.

Rep. Henry Kalis (DFL-Walters), chair of the real House Capital Investment Committee, reminded mock legislators of the political pressures that committee members feel. He warned them that they would face tough opposition from legislators in southern Minnesota if they refused to fund a \$24 million request for a library at Winona State University. In fact, the final recommendation included funding for libraries in St. Cloud and Winona, and a new archives and overflow facility at the University of Minnesota.

In a discussion that followed the panel, the mock legislators said it was difficult to consider so many capital budget requests and make their recommendations in the space of an afternoon. To which Rep. Richard Jefferson (DFL-Mpls) responded, "If you have months to do it, like we do, you expose yourself to being pounded on and pounded on by 200 legislators."

Jefferson said that when he was first assigned to the newly formed committee, "The chairman called us all together and said, 'You have just been put on a committee that nobody knows anything about now and nobody cares about. But next year you'll be everybody's best friend. And then after you take the vote you'll be hated by 95 percent of the people.'"



CONSUMERS

Refueling price wars

SAUK RAPIDS — If you expect more from a leader, sometimes you get it.

That's how critics describe the gasoline pricing policies of direct suppliers of gasoline such as Amoco, which typically charge retailers between 2 and 4 cents more per gallon than "gasoline jobbers," who supply retailers with gas from several sources.

That discrepancy, and the resulting uneven playing field among retail gas stations, was the focus of a House Commerce and Economic Development Committee meeting Oct. 29.

Although the price spread between a jobber and a direct-supplier is normally between

2 to 4 cents per gallon, sometimes the spread is much wider. That can be good for consumers, but one former station owner claimed the difference forced him out of business.

A bill introduced in the House in 1993, which will be pursued further in 1994, is intended to limit the price differential. The measure, sponsored by Rep. John Sama (DFL-Mpls), would cap the price refiners can charge retailers at 2.5 cents per gallon, "inclusive of transportation costs from the refiner to the retailer."

That, the service station owners testified, could do a lot to level the playing field between jobber-supplied and direct-supplied retailers.

Alan Merschman, an Amoco dealer from Bemidji, told the committee he occasionally has been forced to sell gasoline for 8 to 9 cents more per gallon more than his jobber-supplied competitor.

"Our problems are created by an evolution in this industry," Merschman said, "where profits are now measured in pennies, not dollars." He told the committee he would prefer to see a "comprehensive policy" written by refiners to stop the practice instead of a law. However, he will still support the proposed legislation, he said.

But not everyone agrees.

Dan Gunderson, an Amoco representative, said the bill will, among other things, force his company out of the gasoline dealer business. It also will raise the price jobbers charge for their products, thereby costing consumers more in the long run, Gunderson added.

"Just like milk, this is a gasoline pricing bill. Anytime you legislate prices you're setting a floor," he said. "It's [the bill] basically aimed at Amoco, but it will affect gasoline prices all over the state."

Nevertheless, Rep. James Farrell (DFL-St. Paul), co-author of the bill, remained adamant. Farrell vowed he would not "back down" on eliminating the pricing practices which he considers discriminatory.



CRIME

Jail overcrowding

ST. CLOUD — "Go to jail. Go directly to jail. Do not pass 'Go.' Do not collect \$200."

That old Monopoly game card spells out the fate of many offenders, a fate that has resulted in correctional overcrowding throughout the United States.

Although overcrowding in Minnesota jails has been less severe than elsewhere, the problem has begun to spread from metro area counties to rural counties.

Officials from three of those counties — Benton, Stearns, and Sherburne — aired their views on the dilemma before the House Judiciary Committee, which is chaired by Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls). The Oct. 28 meeting focused on "Jail capacity: a county perspective" and took place in the board room of the Stearns County Administration Center in St. Cloud.

One solution to the problem of overcrowding is to build more jails or expand existing ones.

Sherburne County Sheriff Dick Witschen described the history of the existing Sherburne County Jail, a jail that opened in 1980 with 24 beds. Within five years, the jail was overcrowded, he said, and required a variance from the Department of Corrections so that cots could be used to accommodate overcrowding. In 1988, the jail was expanded to 50 beds. In 1992, only four years after construction, the facility again became overcrowded, and the sheriff sought another variance allowing double bunking for the medium-security population. This increased the jail capacity to the current 65 beds, he said.

Since population projections indicate a substantial increase in jail population, Sherburne County is now planning for more jail construction.

"Sentencing and Correctional Policies," a 1991 report by the Program Evaluation Division of the Office of the Legislative Auditor, cites several causes of jail crowding:

- "There have been changes in local sentencing policies for offender groups — drunk drivers, drug users, and repeat minor offenders — which include short jail terms and split sentences;
- "Pretrial detention policies have been 'toughened' to reflect public safety concerns;
- "Age composition shifts are related to changes in the jail population for both pretrial detainees and sentenced offenders; and
- "Prison crowding has resulted in jail crowding in many states due to: 1) the practice of housing state inmates in local jails, 2) delays in transferring state-bound convicted offenders, and 3) the need to hold offenders in jail who would normally be returned to prison as probation or parole violators."

But building or expanding jails isn't the only answer to the problem of overcrowding. Witschen said county officials also are experimenting with some short-term remedies.

One of them, the Sentence to Service (STS) program, he said, allows non-violent inmates to earn additional good-time through community service work (See "Sentenced to serve," page 5). He said another remedy, the Home Detention Program, targets those prisoners who are given work-release privileges but who traditionally must spend nights in jail. Requiring them to spend nights at home frees up space for other prisoners.

Benton County Board Chair Michael Moulzolf agreed that alternatives to incarceration must be developed. "Public opinion is to lock up everyone who breaks the law, but this can't be done," he said. "There is not enough money in the state to accomplish that."



Patrons of the Viking Cafe in downtown Fergus Falls went about their daily business as KBRF radio news director Jim Sturgeon and program director Charlie Kampa fielded questions from listeners during an hour-and-a-half call-in program with the House leadership. The live broadcast began early in the morning Oct. 27.

"Jail," he said, "should be for pre-sentence prisoners and after they are processed through the courts, which should take only six months, they should go on to a regional facility owned and operated by the state."

Moulzolf advised members to take a hard look at the state's sentencing guidelines and to provide for other programs to handle the overload.

Judges are concerned about jail alternatives, too, said Stearns County Judge Richard T. Jessen, who added that too many people are being jailed.

Jessen said he supports shorter jail sentences, Sentence to Service programs, and day drop-in centers for people out of jail.

Also, there is a need for public defenders, he said. "If we don't have enough [public defenders], it slows down the process."

Stearns County Sheriff Jim Kostreba said that prisons and jails should be for repeat offenders, and that the focus should be on crime prevention. "We must start with the very young," he said, and "we must start now."

Jails vs. prisons

"A jail is not a prison. Prisons are correctional institutions maintained by the federal and state governments for the confinement of convicted felons. Jails are facilities of local authority for the temporary detention of defendants awaiting trial or disposition on federal or state charges, and of convicted offenders sentenced to short-term imprisonment for minor crimes. Historically, however, jails have been somewhat more than this — they have been used for the holding of many types of suspects, outcasts, and offenders."

Source: Inciardi, James A., *Criminal Justice*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Orlando, Fla., 1990, p. 550.



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Fergus Falls elementary school teacher Renee Larsen testified before a joint hearing of the House Education Committee's K-12 Education Finance Division and the Property Tax Reform Task Force at the Fergus Falls Middle School Oct. 28.



EDUCATION

Mapping out graduation rule

ST. CLOUD — Confusion and controversy continue to swirl around what is the best way for students to meet the state's proposed graduation rule, which is still being developed.

So lawmakers learned at a public hearing of the Education Committee's Education Standards Subcommittee in St. Cloud Oct. 28. The hearing was attended by at least 30 school administrators, teachers, students and parents.

They testified for and against Outcome-Based Education (OBE), which is one of the educational paths being considered to help students meet the graduation rule that is to be in place by 1996.

The 1993 Legislature appropriated \$10.3 million over the next two years so the Minnesota Department of Education could establish 13 pilot projects around the state to help develop the graduation rule. The St. Cloud school district is one of those pilot sites.

There, educators are experimenting with OBE as well as interdisciplinary learning. The latter is a process whereby students learn skills in one discipline and transfer them to another, such as outlining an English assignment, then using that skill in geography.

"We had a lot of fun and you learn a lot more when you're having fun," Jill Kantor, a student at St. Cloud's South Junior High School, told the committee. Kantor was involved in an interdisciplinary learning project last year — one that Jill's mother, Dorothy, said helped Jill build her self-confidence.

Likewise, another parent, Robert Fueling, was equally impressed with progress his sixth grade son, Ricky, made with some of the new methods of classroom instruction.

"I believe that when my boy gets out of school, with the way they're teaching him, he'll be off and running," Fueling said. "I think the St. Cloud schools are great."

Other parents, however, were less enthusiastic. They were more confused — and concerned — over exactly what kind of progress their children were making in school. Their concerns stemmed from St. Cloud schools permitting three tests — "test, test, and re-test" — to demonstrate progress in some of the new programs. (Recently, the school system began moving away from that procedure.)

With the three-test procedure, Harriet Braun of St. Cloud, who has one son in second grade and another in kindergarten, said her children got the message that, "Now I can be lazy and stupid," she said.



ENVIRONMENT

Sentenced to serve

FERGUS FALLS — Where do you turn when you have an almost non-existent budget and a charge to get a new state park ready for public use? If you're Glendalough State Park Coordinator Les Estes, you look to the jails.

"I scrounge any jail [for workers] they will let me have," said Estes. The laborers are part of the Sentence to Service (STS) program



Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee got a close look at a wetland that is part of a restoration project by the Fergus Falls Chapter of Future Farmers of America. The project was visited during a tour of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center Oct. 27.

which puts offenders into work programs. On a routine basis, 10-12 STS participants work at Glendalough. Estes has the crews working on all types of assignments including raking leaves, taking down barbed wire, and building fences.

"We should be doing a lot more with STS," said Rep. Wes Skoglund (DFL-Mpls). He said that voters support sentence to work programs.

"In my 28 years in this business, I've never seen anything that was so well received by the public, the political system, and the offenders," said John McLagan, the statewide director of the STS program. "There are all kinds of examples where their time was up and the offender comes back and asks to continue to participate."

It takes about two days for the STS workers to get used to working at the park, but after that they take a lot of pride in their work, Estes told members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee Oct. 27. One week Estes' had more former STS participants working on his crew as volunteers than he did offenders who had to serve in the program.

Judges can use the STS program for non-dangerous offenders in a number of ways. For example, an offender can reduce his time in jail by participating in the STS program or can work off a fine imposed by the court. The state law establishing STS states that its participants can not be used to displace state workers.

Glendalough was managed for over 50 years as a private game farm prior to being donated by the Cowles family to the Nature Conservancy in 1990. The property was deeded to the state in 1992. The park will include camping facilities, a bicycle trail con-

necting it to the city of Battle Lake, and a "Heritage Fishery" on Annie Battle Lake which will prohibit the use of motors and electronic fishing gear.

Praising prairie potholes

FERGUS FALLS — As wind whipped a group of state legislators touring the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Wetlands Manager Kevin Brennan gave his pitch for why the state should provide \$75,000 to help fund the initial planning phase for an expanded facility.

Eighty percent of the wetlands in the "prairie pothole region" of Minnesota have been lost, Brennan told members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee Oct. 27. He believes the key to preventing further loss is to educate the public — future farmers in particular — about the importance of wetlands.

Efforts to build the center have been under way for 10 years. To date, more than 300 acres have been acquired for the center with the use of money raised through the sale of federal duck stamps.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has recommended the construction of an \$11 million facility that would contain both a learning center and administrative space.

The center would provide an eastern gateway to the "prairie pothole region," serve as a cooperative education facility, and allow for consolidated office facilities for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Brennan said that by co-locating state and federal offices people could have one-stop shopping when it comes to wetlands issues.

"I believe there is a way we can all survive out here. [The center] should be a place where a farmer feels as welcome as a conservation person."

The prairie pothole region is spread across western Minnesota, parts of North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and into Canada. It's estimated that there were 20 million acres of wetlands across the Prairie Pothole Region prior to settlement. More than half of the prairie wetlands have been drained or filled to accommodate the demand for cultivated and grazing lands and development.

Lawyers and landfills

ST. CLOUD — The state law governing landfill cleanup pits businesses and cities against each other and threatens the business climate, city and business leaders told visiting state legislators. Nearly 20 people spoke before a joint public hearing of two House committees: Environment and Natural Resources and Environment and Natural Resources Finance, Oct. 29 in St. Cloud.

"The landfill question is polarizing our businesses," said St. Cloud Mayor Chuck Winkelmann. Currently, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is looking at ways to remedy the contamination at the St. Augusta landfill in St. Cloud. To date, 22 businesses and individuals have been identified as being responsible for cleanup costs.

But according to St. Cloud lawyer Jerry Howard, the St. Augusta landfill has a high percentage of municipal waste in addition to industrial waste. "It's a problem for all society, not just named parties," he said.

"Landfills don't really work well in the Superfund program," said Linda Taylor, a legislative analyst for the House of Representatives. The law, designed to finance the

cleanup of contamination from hazardous substances, works better for old, industrial sites where it is easier to pinpoint the businesses responsible for the contamination. But many landfills were used by whole communities and accepted both household and business waste.

Under the state's Superfund law, any person who contributed hazardous substances to a landfill can be held responsible to help pay for its cleanup costs. Under a "joint and several liability clause" in the law, "if you are responsible for any part of something, you are responsible for the whole amount," Taylor said.

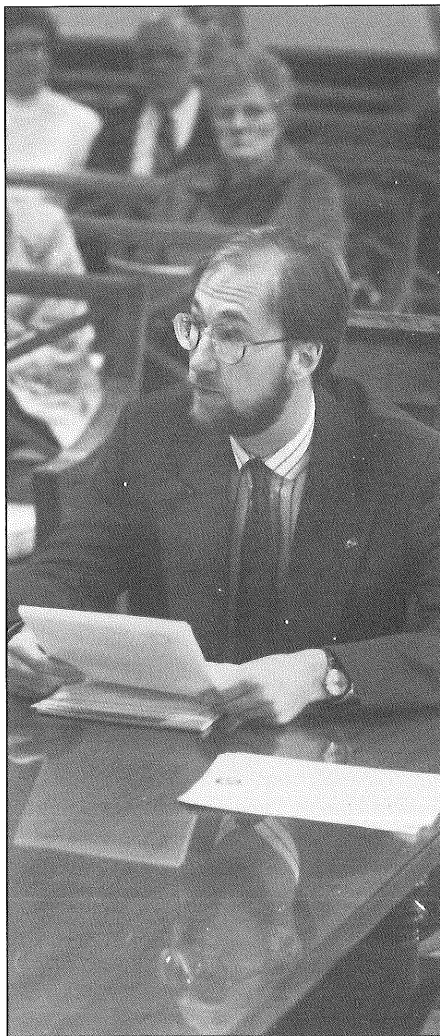
Municipalities can be held liable if they owned or operated a landfill or if they transported or disposed of hazardous substances. But while the term hazardous substance often conjures up images of barrels oozing toxic chemicals, common household items such as cleaning agents, nail polish remover, pesticides, and paints can also contaminate land and groundwater.

A problem with applying Superfund principles at landfills is that it doesn't matter whether you followed the law in place at the time you disposed of waste or how much you dumped, according to waste hauler Mary Ayde. You can be held liable for "as little as a cup of waste, whether you disposed of it or brought it."

Ayde said her business is involved in three investigations in the metro area and has already paid \$18,000 for its part in the cleanup of the Oak Grove landfill in Anoka County — \$10,000 for cleanup and \$8,000 for lawyers. She said that her company followed the laws in place at the time they hauled waste to these landfills.

The current law operates under the concept of "clean up now and litigate later," Taylor said. And legal fees can be as much as cleanup costs.

The process needs to focus more on cleanup and less on litigation says Dave Lucas, Sherburne County's solid waste coordinator. Taylor said two bills have been filed, ready to be introduced in the 1994 Legislative Session, to take landfill cleanup out of the state's Superfund law and establish a cleanup program for landfills.



Mike Norby from Norby's Department Store testified before the House Ethics Committee Oct. 27 at the Fergus Falls City Hall.

NOTES

When state naturalists started exploring options for interpreting the vegetation at Glendalough State Park, they were stumped. They found numerous non-native trees sprinkled throughout the woods with no clear pattern.

After letting them stew about the mystery for awhile, Les Estes, the park's coordinator, solved the puzzle. He said an earlier owner of Glendalough would give his staff trees and tell them to "plant [a tree] wherever you think there should be one." According to Estes, you could say the former game farm had a plan of "management by no management."



ETHICS

Little outcry over ethics

FERGUS FALLS — Although the newspapers are filled with stories about legislative ethics, public concern about the issue appeared minimal at a House Ethics Committee meeting Oct. 27.

"I'd kind of like to know why we're talking about this," said Jim Worner of Worner's Auto Sales Inc. in Fergus Falls. "Your ethics . . . is not on my list of concerns."

Instead, he asked lawmakers to focus on bread and butter issues such as bringing Minnesota's workers' compensation rates in line with those of neighboring North Dakota, where he claimed the business climate is more favorable.

The Ethics Committee meeting marked the first of several committee meetings held during the Minnesota Plains Public Forums sponsored by the Minnesota House of Representatives. The meetings are designed to make the Capitol in St. Paul more accessible to citizens in Greater Minnesota.

And it was just that access to lawmakers that several area business people cited in defending the use of hired lobbyists to speak on their behalf in St. Paul.

"I can arrange to be here. I probably couldn't arrange to be in St. Paul," said Randy Christianson, vice president of Beverage Wholesalers Inc. in Detroit Lakes and Moorhead.

Added Roy Larson, a vice president with Otter Tail Power Co. in Fergus Falls and one of about 30 people to attend the meeting, "Don't make it more difficult to make our business concerns known to you."

In response to public concerns about ethical lapses by government officials, the House has expanded the duties and membership of its Ethics Committee and asked it to propose reforms to be considered by the 1994 Legislature.

The meeting in Fergus Falls was the second in a series to be held by the committee throughout the state to gather information in order to develop more comprehensive ethical standards for elected officials.

Among the possible recommendations is one that would require lobbyists to disclose more information to the Ethical Practices Board on what they spend and on whom, and another that would prohibit lobbyists from buying anything — including a cup of coffee or a meal — for a legislator.

While many who testified said they thought the ban on coffee and meals too restrictive, lobbyist Nancy Larson said the increased reporting option won't guarantee a clearer

view of the lobbying process because it's so complex.

That's because some lobbyists, for example, offer help on legislative campaigns. That could provide a significant benefit to a legislator but wouldn't necessarily appear on a lobbyist's spending report, she said. But the purchase of a meal could appear on such a report if more stringent reporting requirements are adopted.

"How do you differentiate [in terms of importance] between a meal that's purchased and somebody who is going out and working for you?" asked Larson, executive director of the Minnesota Association of Small Cities.

Perhaps the most pointed criticism came from Helen Rudie of the League of Women Voters in the Moorhead Area. While she generally praised the 1993 Legislature for approving a sweeping campaign finance reform measure and the House for holding ethics hearings, she criticized the Legislature's internal operations.

She called on the Legislature to adopt a system so committee chairs could be rotated "to avoid undue buildups of power," and urged members to be more polite, sensitive, and punctual.

"Do not postpone hearings without at least a day's notice; there is no better way to build ill will on the part of someone who may have driven in from International Falls," she said. "When citizens testify before committees, hearings should begin on time if at all possible; copies of bills and current amendments should be available for everyone, not just a select few; and a process should be established for citizens to address grievances if they feel they've been treated unjustly."

guided through the Legislature in the past few years.

MinnesotaCare provides subsidized care to families whose income is up to 275 percent of poverty level. The creation of the subsidized state health plan last year was followed by a health reform package passed this year that could dramatically restructure the way health care is delivered in the state. The new law promotes the development of integrated service networks (ISNs) — health plans that bring together a number of providers devoted to providing quality care at the same time they hold down costs by avoiding unnecessary procedures.

One audience member wanted to know if the formation of ISNs meant the end of solo practice. "In three years, 95 percent of the people will go into ISNs, so the medical providers will go in, too," Greenfield said. In other words, solo practitioners won't be forced to join ISNs but may find they can't afford not to.

One improvement affecting those with less than perfect health is that pre-existing conditions can only be excluded from coverage for one year under the new ISN plan. Under the current system, "you have people who pay for insurance, and the thing they're most likely to need health care for isn't covered," Greenfield said.

Another facet of the new plan is the adoption of community rating, meaning all the insured will pay the same monthly rate, without adjustments for age and gender. Under some previous insurance policies, young women paid more than young men, and the old more than the young.

"We used to distinguish gender. That meant women paid for pregnancies and men didn't. We couldn't figure out how they got pregnant without men," Greenfield said, illustrat-

ing the unfairness of the prevailing rate differences. He said the young shouldn't be upset about paying higher rates in their twenties when they consider that their future insurance costs will not escalate as much as they would if age rating were allowed.

Some health care providers expressed concern about the amount of paperwork required for reimbursement and wondered how much more paperwork the move to ISNs would require. Judith Schultz, home health care director for Lake Region Hospital in Fergus Falls, said that the state Medical Assistance program reimburses home health care at considerably lower rates than the federal Medicare program, yet requires more paperwork. Nurses end up spending a third of all their time in charting and paperwork, she said.

"When we go out of the institutions [as for home health care], we get very nervous and we try to make up for it with more regulations," Greenfield said.

Rep. Dave Gruenes (R-St. Cloud) noted that by the end of the biennium, one in 10 Minnesotans will be on Medical Assistance, and something must be done to hold down costs that are increasing by 25 to 28 percent each biennium.

The meeting of the Human Services Finance Division of the House Health and Human Services Committee was held at Lake Region Hospital and Nursing Home in Fergus Falls.

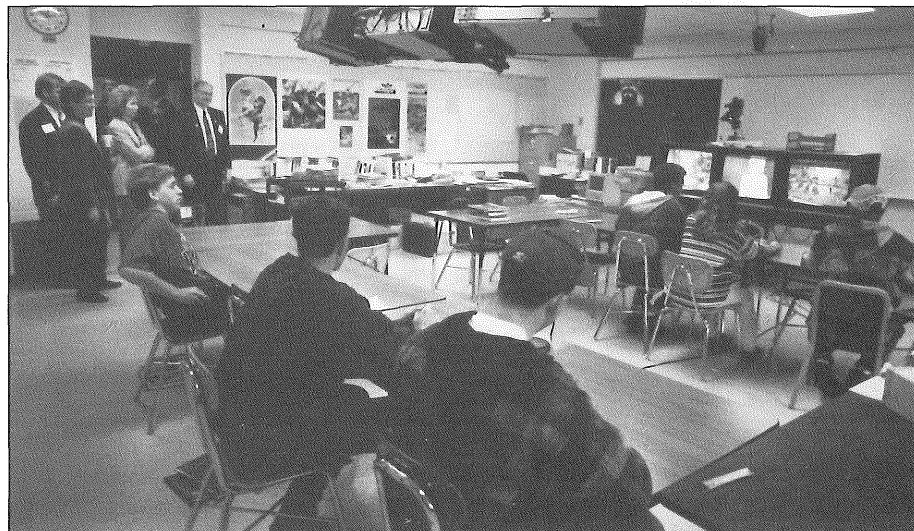


HEALTH

Health insurance reform

FERGUS FALLS — Minnesota has the second lowest number of people without insurance of all 50 states, second only to Hawaii, Rep. Lee Greenfield (DFL-Mpls) told about 40 health care providers and consumers in Fergus Falls Oct. 28.

Only 7 percent of Minnesotans don't have any kind of health insurance. One of the reasons for this low rate is that working poor people who have children are now able to get subsidized insurance through the MinnesotaCare plan. MinnesotaCare is one component of an extensive insurance reform package that Greenfield and others have



Members of the Facilities Subcommittee of the K-12 Education Finance Division of the House Education Committee got a first-hand look at an interactive video classroom while touring Big Lake High School Oct. 29.

Health care access

ST. CLOUD — In spite of being the third largest metropolitan area in the state, St. Cloud faces some health care access problems more commonly associated with rural areas. Its hospital, which provides a wide array of services, has trouble recruiting primary care physicians.

And without enough primary care physicians, a number of St. Cloud residents — particularly the uninsured and underinsured — are having trouble obtaining access to health care.

A somewhat grim scenario was painted for legislators who attended a special meeting of the Human Services Finance Division of the House Health and Human Services Committee at the St. Cloud Hospital Oct. 29. The public meeting centered on health services for families, children, and people with special needs.

Three years ago, St. Cloud Hospital set up the Mid-Minnesota Health Clinic to address the needs of the uninsured and underinsured. The clinic, which is easily accessible by public transportation, is staffed by a primary care physician as well as a number of volunteers. "We try to find a source of payment and adjust our fees if we can't," said Jim Davis, vice president of network services at St. Cloud Hospital. "No one is turned away due to inability to pay." He said few who go to the clinic have enrolled in MinnesotaCare, the subsidized state health plan for the working poor, because MinnesotaCare rates are still too high for people who are just scraping by.

Although grants cover some of the clinic's costs, the hospital has underwritten expenses to the tune of \$340,000 a year for the past three years.

More than half of the patients at the clinic are children under six years of age. A significant proportion of those served are single

mothers. Immigrants and refugees in the area also tend to use the clinic. The latter populations pose some special challenges. "We discovered significant diseases that we didn't think existed anymore," such as tuberculosis and hepatitis, Davis said. Because of the extent of previously untreated health problems, the lab work to screen such patients "is double the cost that we can get reimbursed by the state," Davis said. "Physicians have found it [treating refugees and immigrants] a very challenging, demanding, and rewarding part of what they do."

Because of demand, the clinic is unable to accept new patients, and regular patients have a six-and-a-half-week wait for a routine appointment. Other primary care physicians in the area are also overscheduled, making it difficult for new patients to get an appointment anywhere in the city. Some women face the dilemma that they can't get an appointment with a primary care physician to confirm a suspected pregnancy. That diagnosis of pregnancy is what permits certain low-income women to qualify for Medical Assistance and be assigned to an obstetrician to get prenatal care.

When Rep. Roger Cooper (DFL-Bird Island) asked if some of the health care access problem could be alleviated through use of nurse practitioners, Davis replied that they "are almost as hard to find as primary care physicians."

Other speakers addressed the need for follow-up home health care to compensate for the brevity of modern hospital stays. Most women who give birth stay in the hospital only one to two days now, compared to five to seven days a generation ago, said Jane Blee, director of the Parent, Child and Women's Care Center at St. Cloud Hospital. Follow-up home visits allow new mothers to ask a nurse important care questions they might not have thought of when they were in labor.

Children and the elderly with special needs can also benefit by home health care, medical directors said. It is now possible to do such procedures as intravenous feeding at home instead of in the hospital.

Health care consumers who spoke at the public meeting addressed the need for health care affordable to those who earn only \$5 to \$12 an hour and criticized health care rules that are penny-wise and pound-foolish.

Cooper was sympathetic to the plight of the ill. "I have people dying in my [rural] district because they can't get health care," he said.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Saving community colleges

FERGUS FALLS — State lawmakers were visibly moved as Cheryl Dee told them how Fergus Falls Community College helped change her life.

Dee was just one of the students and staff at a hearing of the Higher Education Finance Division of the House Education Committee Oct. 28 at Fergus Falls Community College who asked visiting state legislators to help maintain the unique character of community colleges when the state university, community, and technical college systems are merged in 1995.

Dee said that she found herself in an all-too-familiar situation as a divorced working mother of two trying to make ends meet. Working night shifts left her little time to spend with her children. Dee's decision to stop waitressing full time in favor of going back to school proved a humbling one at first; she found it difficult to use food stamps and go on public assistance to supplement the diminished income she received from part-time work.

But Dee said her story proves that people can believe in new beginnings. Although initially unsure she was college material, Dee said college staff helped build her confidence so she could achieve academically. She graduated and found a good job with the Otter Tail County Department of Human Services.

"I'm thankful to God, and, of course, the state Legislature," Dee told the members of the Higher Education Division — a comment that prompted surprise by at least one member of the panel.

"It has been a long time since we [the state Legislature] and God have been in the same sentence," replied Rep. Jeff Bertram (DFL-Paynesville).

With a small student body of 1,350 full-



Randy Buhl, right, vice president and chief financial officer of Frontier Equipment Inc. in Fergus Falls, gave three House leaders a tour of his company Oct. 27. Left to right: Minority Leader Steve Sviggum, Majority Leader Phil Carruthers, and Speaker-designate Irv Anderson.

time and part-time students, the community college prides itself on providing students with experiences that build academic and leadership skills. Students told committee members that professors are able to offer them personal attention because of small class sizes.

Tammy Van Erp, valedictorian of her high school class, said that she was offered scholarships at a number of institutions, but chose Fergus Falls Community College because of the positive experiences her brothers had there. She was particularly pleased with the opportunities she found to participate in leadership activities as a freshman and sophomore — something she said is more difficult at larger, four-year institutions.

While a number of students come to the community college academically prepared for college work, more than 40 percent of the students begin college deficient in English, and even more are deficient in math. The result is that the college must use a significant percentage of its resources on remedial instruction.

Hal Leland, a counselor at the community college, said that increasing numbers of students are in need of special help to cope with both learning disabilities and physical and psychological disabilities. He told legislators that the college needs more funding to deal with the rapidly growing population of students who come to college needing remedial help.

Not enough library space

ST. CLOUD — Overcrowding at the St. Cloud State University (SCSU) Library makes it difficult to study and access information, students and staff told visiting state legislators Oct. 29.

While the library was designed with 8,000 students in mind, SCSU now has more than 14,500 students, Greg Blaisdell, president of SCSU's Student Government, told members of the Higher Education Finance Division of the House Education Committee and the Capital Investment Committee who were at the campus for a joint hearing.

Blaisdell said that the library has been so crowded at times that he has had to study leaning against a wall.

SCSU's Vice President Eugene Gilchrist said that the university is predicting a 40 percent increase in the size of its student body between 1982 and 2002, making a new library all the more necessary.

The total cost for a new library and a central chiller facility to serve the library is \$34 million; the 1992 Legislature authorized

\$290,000 in bonding authority for preliminary designs for a new structure.

Gary Johnson, a teacher at Dassel-Cokato High School 45 miles away, said that the library serves as a regional resource. He teaches all of his students how to use the library through site visits and by hooking up to the state computer by modem.

But much of the library's computer system is far from being state-of-the-art. When Gilchrist tried to tie in to the SCSU library with his home computer, he found that his computer communicated too quickly for the library's computer to understand, and later had to buy a software package to slow his computer down.

In addition to the library, the SCSU's bonding proposal includes the following requests: \$2.1 million for boiler replacement; \$1.6 million for land acquisition; \$3 million for remodeling and \$100,000 to study the university's future needs for instructional and laboratory space.

The land acquisition request is part of an effort since 1988 to buy lots in the six-block area immediately west of the campus. To date, the university has purchased 44 of 74 parcels. Juliana Elchert, a resident of the university neighborhood, said that the dramatic growth of SCSU's student body has had a traumatic effect on the area where she lives.

She asked legislators to think about the impact on the neighborhood as they considered SCSU's funding requests and suggested that the university consider capping enrollment. Of particular concern is the impact of student vehicles on the streets adjacent to the campus.

Gilchrist said that SCSU is attempting to solve its parking problems through improved mass transit. And by purchasing the homes in the six-block area, the campus will have a boundary that should help alleviate the impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.

Rep. Henry Kalis (DLF-Walters), chair of the Capital Investment Committee, said that he was glad to hear that the university is working on mass transit and not just relying on the construction of parking ramps.



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It's a fact!

There are five lakes within the Fergus Falls city limits and 1,000 lakes within Otter Tail County, making it one of the most beautiful regions of the state.

But with those scenic lakes have come several tragic drownings over the years, which led to the local legend of the "Three Indian Johns" — father, son and grandson, all from Stillwater.

Although the authenticity of their claimed American Indian heritage remains in doubt, there is no question about their skill in recovering the bodies of drowning victims. They could locate a body within a day or two after local authorities had spent as long as a month searching in vain.

"On one occasion when Indian John I seemed to have failed to recover a body after a prolonged search, Indian John suggested that the 'victim' hadn't drowned at all since he purchased a rather large life-insurance policy," according to *Otter Tail County: History in Brief*. "And, sure enough, within a few months the sheriff recovered the 'body' — very much alive."

The three generations of "Indian Johns" plied their skills between 1919 and the 1930s, and all arrived in the county carrying two suitcases. But their recovery methods remain a mystery, perhaps to ensure that their lucrative business remained in the family.

Indian John I charged \$100 plus \$10 a day, John II charged \$150 and \$15 per day and John III \$250 and \$20 per day — evidence, according to local accounts, that inflation had set in.

On one occasion, Indian John I demanded payment before he recovered a body.

"The widowed Mrs. Johnson did not have ready cash, so Sheriff Billings and County Attorney Anton Thompson were asked to demand the body," according to *Otter Tail County: History in Brief*. "But Indian John left it in the 'sloo' with an underground marker that only he could find. Fergus Falls Mayor Leonard Erickson convened the City Council which thereupon appropriated all but \$5 of the fee, and that balance was raised by private subscription. Upon receiving his pay, Indian John rowed to the center of the sloo and produced the body."

Town meeting in Fergus Falls . . .

Stray voltage, Eurasian milfoil, gas tax top concerns

Lonnie Nelson, a farmer in Clitherall, Minn., had just given an impassioned speech about how stray voltage is affecting his young daughter's health and destroying his cows.

Then, he hesitated and expressed the doubt that could be on the minds of many people who get a chance to make their case before legislators about an issue that disturbs them.

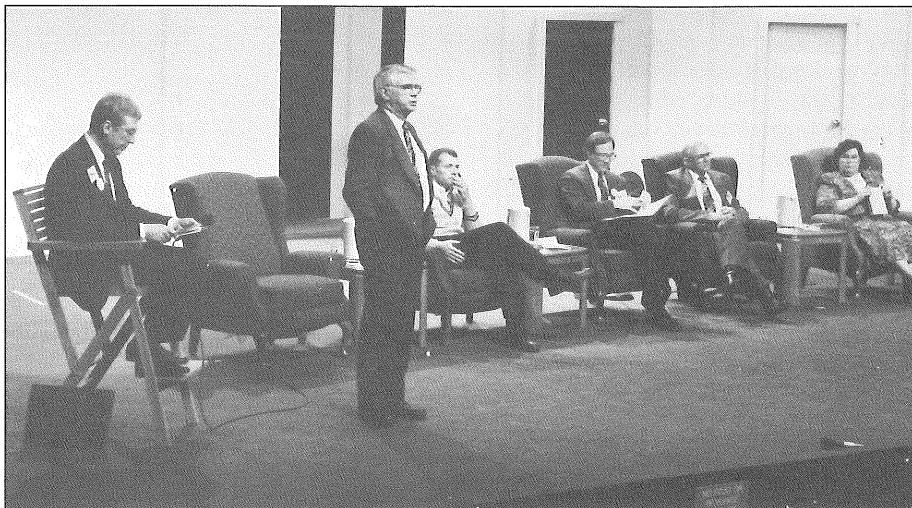
"You folks think we're all crazy," Nelson said.

"We don't think you're crazy," said Rep. Irv Anderson (DFL-Int'l Falls), the House speaker-designate. "Be assured we're with you on this issue."

Legislators attending a Minnesota Plains Town Meeting Oct. 27 at the Fergus Falls Middle School heard from many west central Minnesota residents about a range of concerns from outcome-based education to the threat milfoil poses for the tourism industry. About 200 people, including many members of the House of Representatives, attended the meeting.

"I'm going to be put out of business because of stray voltage," Nelson said at the town meeting. "I told you before, they're killing us — that's exactly what they're doing." Nelson and another farmer concerned about stray voltage, Dave Lusty of Miliona, drew expressions of concern from legislators.

Rep. Hilda Bettermann (IR-Brandon) said she would like to see a thorough discussion of the issue by people who understand it, including veterinarians. "We need people who know the administrative rules for utilities so we can stop stray voltage from happening," Bettermann said.



House Speaker-designate Irv Anderson, *standing*, answered a question at the town meeting Oct. 27 at the Fergus Falls Middle School. Joining Anderson on the stage were, *left to right*, Rep. Bob Anderson, House Minority Leader Steve Sviggum, House Majority Leader Phil Carruthers, and Reps. Marvin Dauner and Hilda Bettermann.

If an impartial consultant were to study the issue, "will you accept his results?" Anderson asked the two farmers.

"Can you ever find one the farmers and power company like?" Lusty asked.

"We have to listen to all sides and the result will usually be a compromise," replied Anderson.

Another environmental issue that was raised involves Eurasian milfoil, a harmful exotic species that has already been identified in more than 50 Minnesota lakes. "If Eurasian milfoil ever got started in this chain of lakes, I could see the demise of the recreational industry," said Jim Meinert, owner of Rush Lake Resort in Ottertail.

Rep. Tony Kinkel (DFL-Park Rapids) said

lake associations have been helping the state Department of Natural Resources monitor their lakes for milfoil, and access areas can be shut off if milfoil is found. Meanwhile, some remedies may be on the horizon. "There are some fish that eat it, but we don't know what else they eat," Kinkel said.

Citizens got a glimpse of the delicacy of any debate over taxes after the president of a construction company lamented the failure of the Legislature to pass a gasoline tax increase to fund road construction this past session. "Do you feel a 5-cent gas tax will be on your agenda again?" asked Wayne Ronning, president of H & R Construction Company in Dalton. "Sixty-five thousand construction workers are vitally concerned about your action."

Anderson said it would be hard to support such an increase "unless the governor has it in granite that he'd sign such a bill." To be on record as favoring a tax increase that was vetoed could have political repercussions, he said.

"What I'm upset about is that the governor says he will veto any transportation package," said Majority Leader Phil Carruthers (DFL-Brooklyn Center). Carruthers said he favors a return to the days when transportation funding got bipartisan support.

Sviggum said transportation money must be spent wisely, citing as an example of waste the empty Metropolitan Transit Commission buses he sees going past the Capitol late in the evening.

Another question that brought out party differences was posed by Rick Byzewski, a



Rep. Andy Steensma talked one-on-one with Roy Sandstrom of Clitherall following the Oct. 27 town meeting at the Fergus Falls Middle School. After each town meeting in Fergus Falls and St. Cloud, legislators broke into smaller groups so citizens could ask questions about specific subjects.

10th grader at Fergus Falls Senior High School, who wanted to know about outcome-based education. "How will it change my classroom, and how do you feel about the new plan?" he asked.

Rep. Kathleen Vellenga (DFL-St. Paul) said outcome-based education, which she prefers to call "results-oriented" education, measures "What do you get for what you put in? . . . It's a standard of what the diploma means," she said. "It probably won't change anything in the classroom."

But Rep. Steve Sviggum (IR-Kenyon) said classrooms will most likely be affected. "We need to increase our educational standards," especially in math and science, he said. "We need to expect more out of our students." Graduates of Fergus Falls High School must be ready to compete not just with graduates from Alexandria and Fargo, but with the Taiwanese, Japanese, and Germans as well, Sviggum said.

Other issues raised at the town meeting included access to mental health care, incentives for chiropractors to locate in rural areas, and the desire for a recreational trail on an abandoned railroad corridor from Fergus Falls to Wadena.



HOUSING

Migrant, low-income housing

FERGUS FALLS — Trailer parks in Third World condition and a housing shortage that leaves migrant workers camping out in city parks are just a few of the housing problems in west central Minnesota.

Speakers at a Housing Committee hearing at Riverview Heights Public Housing in Fergus Falls Oct. 27 impressed upon visiting legislators that housing is not just an urban problem.

The housing shortage in west central Minnesota hinders economic development because manufacturers are reluctant to locate in communities that don't have sufficient housing for workers, Walt Bruns told legislators. Bruns is senior program specialist for the West Central Initiative Fund.

More housing options for seniors would free up the elderly residents' three- or four-bedroom homes to be sold to younger families, Bruns said. Senior citizens make up about 20 percent of the area's population.

One of the major challenges west central Minnesota communities face is providing housing for migrant workers who are recruited from Texas to come up and work in the sugar beet fields. It is estimated that at least 5,300 people — including workers and

their children — migrate to Polk, Norman, and Marshall counties in northwestern Minnesota each growing season.

"A lot pull their kids out of school in Texas and come here early so they can find housing," said Jan Delage, director of community services for the Tri-Valley Opportunity Council in Crookston. The housing shortage has resulted in: three or four families sharing one unit; people living in camp-like conditions, doing all their cooking on barbecue grills; and the housing of families in motels.

"People, for a dozen years, have been sleeping in pickups and cars in parking lots, plagued by flies and mosquitoes, with not even a place to shower and get a decent night's rest after putting in a hard day in the fields," Delage said.

Opposition from year-round residents has made it difficult to get support for housing projects that would serve migrant families, Delage said. A \$1 million proposal to build a 28-unit housing complex for migrants was opposed by citizens first in Crookston, then in Stephen, Argyle, and Ada. The project was to be funded with a Farmers Home Administration grant and loan. Tenants would have received federal rent subsidies so they paid no more than 30 percent of their income for the three-bedroom units. The units would not have been adequately insulated to be occupied through the winter, and it was the seasonal nature of the housing that sparked some complaints, according to area news reports.

Cheryl Schrenk, staff attorney for Migrant Legal Services in Fargo, said that testimony against the proposal offered at public hearings made it clear that discrimination played a strong role. The discrimination was based not just on the prospective tenants' low incomes but on their Hispanic ethnicity. "I don't want those people living in my neigh-

borhood" was the comment heard at one public hearing after another, she said.

Rep. Steven Smith (IR-Mound) wondered why the growers were not required to provide housing, "so it doesn't fall on the taxpayer." Delage said the farmers' response is: "What other employer is responsible for housing?"

The Tri-Valley Opportunity Council is now studying a proposal to build year-round housing that would shelter college students attending the University of Minnesota at Crookston during the school year and migrant workers during the summer. Even if the combined student/migrant worker housing is built, additional housing will still be needed for families who arrive for early seeding and don't leave until after harvest, Delage said.

The plight of people who live in manufactured home parks was also addressed by a few speakers, who said residents lived in deplorable conditions and felt powerless to demand remedies. "Manufactured home parks are the rural equivalent of the slum tenement housing in urban areas," said Shawn Fremstad, an attorney for Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota.

Speakers suggested that the Legislature address rural housing issues by holding a summit on rural housing, opening branch offices of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency in rural areas, making housing loans easier to obtain, and monitoring conditions in manufactured home parks more closely.

Low wages and housing

ST. CLOUD — Nearly half of St. Cloud families make less than \$25,000 a year, leaving many in a struggle to find affordable housing.

According to one study, nearly 50 percent



Stand Rund, a farmer from Fergus Falls, invited Rep. Katy Olson, also a farmer, for dinner at his home during the One-to-One program Oct. 27. The program pairs legislators and local residents for an informal evening of conversation.



A tight schedule in St. Cloud left legislators only a few minutes to eat a box lunch on a bus while waiting for fellow lawmakers to return from morning hearings. Most legislators began the day with a 7 a.m. breakfast at Fingerhut Corporation, followed by a 9 a.m. hearing, an 11:30 a.m. bus tour, and a 1:30 p.m. hearing Oct. 29.

of the jobs in the three-county St. Cloud area are in services and retail trade. A lot of those jobs pay in the \$5 to \$6 an hour range, said Marcus Marsh, director of the St. Cloud Housing and Redevelopment Authority and a former House member.

Marsh was speaking to members of the Housing Committee Oct. 29 at a public meeting held at the Grace McDowell Apartments in St. Cloud. The meeting focused on housing needs and issues in rapidly growing communities.

Rents for affordable two-bedroom apartments in the St. Cloud area range from \$391 to \$471. Considering the guideline that rent should not be more than 30 percent of household income, a single wage earner would have to be earning \$7.52 to \$9.06 an hour, or from \$15,640 to \$18,840 a year, to afford that rent.

But 19 percent of St. Cloud area households have incomes under \$10,000 a year, and another 11 percent have incomes between \$10,000 and \$14,999. This means 30 percent of St. Cloud area households could not even afford to rent a typical two-bedroom apartment.

Expected population growth is likely to aggravate the problem of finding affordable housing. With the area population expected to grow by 25 to 30 percent each decade, "by the year 2010, we'll need an additional 10,000 apartments and an additional 10,000 homes," said Marsh. St. Cloud had 31,567 households in 1990 and is projected to have 50,400 households by the year 2010.

Marsh said the state must look not just at housing programs but at tools to create decent, high-paying jobs. Tax increment fi-

nancing, for instance, has been used to help major industries expand, thus adding jobs which pay people a livable wage that helps them afford housing.

One small-scale housing program that has helped two low-income families a year become homeowners is the St. Cloud Area Habitat for Humanity. Houses facing the wrecking ball have been moved to new sites and sold to working poor families, who put 400 hours of "sweat equity" into the property as part of their payment. The families are required to contribute 30 percent of their monthly income as housing payments.

HUMAN SERVICES

Fergus Falls RTC

FERGUS FALLS — Nineteen-year-old Sonja Benesh is unable to care for herself. She is unable to sit, stand, or roll over. She is non-verbal, non-ambulatory, and she has vision and hearing difficulties. "Sonja's assets are her smile and her personality," said her mother, Deborah Mickelson, who spoke highly of the quality of care Sonja received during the 11 years she spent at the Fergus Falls Regional Treatment Center (RTC).

Mickelson, who is from Ada, Minn., was one of 12 others who testified at an Oct. 28 meeting of the House Health and Human Services Committee focusing on issues relating to the Fergus Falls RTC. The meeting, which was held in the auditorium of the treatment center, was chaired by Rep. Wayne Simoneau (DFL-Fridley).

The Fergus Falls RTC, which is more than

100 years old, serves 17 counties and is part of the state hospital system. In 1969, the center became a multi-disciplinary treatment campus when programs were opened for people with developmental disabilities and chemical dependency (CD) problems, in addition to the existing mental health services.

Besides extolling the virtues of the Fergus Falls RTC, those who spoke at the meeting voiced concern about some of the problems they see in the area of human services.

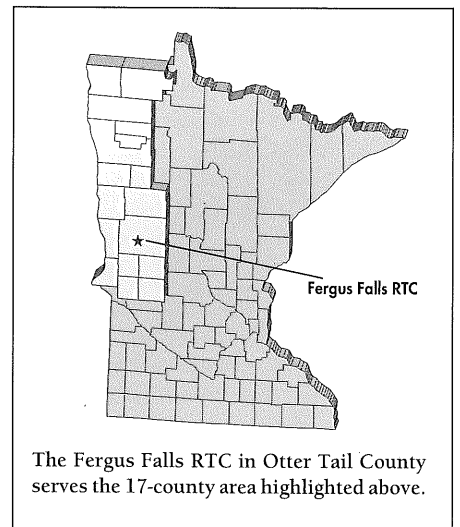
The removal of Sonja from the center, for example, was a state-mandated procedure based on age rather than on needs, a problem Mickelson said she would like to see resolved.

She said Sonja, who is now living in a community setting, is not receiving the same quality of care that she received in the treatment center. Mickelson blames this partially on the fact that most care providers are hired at minimum wage, which causes them to continually seek better jobs — a process that interrupts the constant bonding her daughter needs. Mickelson preferred the peace of mind that came with knowing that in the treatment center Sonja was placed in a group with her peers, and that she was continuously monitored by medical staff.

Likewise, a chemical dependency counselor from Clay County, Ed Pachel, depends upon the Fergus Falls RTC, which averages about 1,000 admissions per year. "It would be a great loss if it wasn't here," he said.

However, he said he has seen a setback in the treatment of chemical dependency in the last three or four years. He mentioned tighter restrictions on funding, downsizing of outpatient treatment programs, and the resistance of insurance companies to pay for treatment as factors that delay proper treatment.

"There is a relatively small window of time in which CD treatment is most effective," said Pachel. "It happens when people have expe-



The Fergus Falls RTC in Otter Tail County serves the 17-county area highlighted above.

rienced enough negative consequences and symptoms of CD to recognize that proper therapy can lead to stopping the problem. That window closes when support systems fall away — when people lose their jobs, family, self esteem, and hope.”

Fifteen years ago, Pachel said he saw people getting treatment during this window period. “Now,” he said, “people have already lost everything before they’re eligible for treatment.”

Pachel emphasized that money spent on CD services is money well spent. The whole country is in an uproar over medical costs and crime out of control, he said. “Many people in hospitals are there because of problems related to chemical usage. And 75 to 80 percent of crimes are connected to chemical use in one way or another.”

Fergus Falls Police Chief John Wagner said that Fergus Falls RTC holds the key to the solution of the problems of violence.

He said that some of the most tragic events during the past summer were committed by individuals who did not necessarily intend to do harm. “They simply were unable to control themselves,” he said, and perhaps suffered from some form of chemical imbalance that could be corrected through treatment and proper medication.

Care for elderly people

COLD SPRING — The story of how Donna and Gene Frank’s next-door neighbor and milkman came to live with them demonstrates that there can be happy alternatives to nursing home care.

The Franks, who have a five-bedroom home in Melrose, are licensed adult foster care providers. “I get great personal satisfaction knowing that I have helped some people finish living their lives with dignity and a family, even if it is a borrowed family,” Donna Frank said at an Oct. 28 meeting of the House Health and Human Services Committee. The committee met at the John Paul Apartments, a congregate housing project for seniors in Cold Spring, to hear about issues affecting the elderly.

After suffering a stroke, the retired milkman, Edwin Walz, had spent three months in a nursing home, where he felt so depressed he wouldn’t eat. Living with the Franks and eating home-cooked meals, he has a good appetite, and always has someone to talk to, which keeps his mind active, Walz’s daughter said in a letter that was read to legislators. Three other seniors also live with the Franks, who help their elderly residents with their daily tasks and paperwork.

The Franks run one of about 40 “Homes



Donna Frank, a “Homes Plus” provider, testified before the House Health and Human Services Committee Oct. 28 at the John Paul Apartments in Cold Spring. Listening to her testimony are her husband, Eugene, left, and Homes resident Edwin Walz.

Plus” in a four-county area that includes Benton, Stearns, Sherburne, and Wright counties. Under the program, seniors live with a family and up to four other seniors in a private home. The cost for someone staying in a private home like the Franks is far less than what it would cost to keep the same person in a nursing home.

Homes Plus is one of the programs operating under the umbrella of the Seniors Assisted in Independent Living (SAIL) project. SAIL was adopted by the 1991 Legislature in response to the increasing needs of a rapidly growing elderly population. Central Minnesota expects an 86 percent increase in the population of people 85 and older by the turn of the century. The four-county area has one of six SAIL projects in the state.

Minnesota now ranks third in the nation in the use of institutional care for frail older persons. If it continues to care for people in nursing homes at the rates it does now, the state will need 8,000 additional nursing home beds by the year 2010, experts on aging

predict. But that’s not the direction the state wants to take, so SAIL was created to promote alternative, cost-effective ways of caring for the elderly that help them maintain some degree of independence.

The elderly can learn about the variety of options available for their care by contacting SAIL. One of the popular programs administered by SAIL arranges for volunteers to spend four hours a week with an ailing elderly person to allow the family caregiver to go shopping or to spend some time on his or her own. The four-county area also has five support groups for family caregivers.

Finding transportation is another difficult issue for some elderly people, especially for those who live on farms but can no longer drive because of disabilities. SAIL uses volunteer drivers to supplement private and public transportation, but more volunteers are needed.

Rep. Becky Lourey (DFL-Kerrick) said members of the House Transportation and Transit, and Education committees are looking at a model program in Tennessee, in which school buses pick up seniors as well as children on their routes, bringing the seniors to an activities center and the children to school. Picking up more people in one area provides children with the benefit of having shorter bus rides, she said.

Legislators emphasized that issues affecting the elderly are among their top concerns. “I don’t think there’s any other issue that I come in more contact with than nursing home or age type of issues,” said Rep. Jeff Bertram (DFL-Paynesville).

INSURANCE

Seniors’ insurance rates

FERGUS FALLS/ST. CLOUD — Two hundred angry, frustrated seniors left messages on Christeen Stone’s answering machine last year. They were complaining about how much their health insurance rates had gone up.

Stone, co-chair of the Health Committee of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), knows the anguish first hand. Her own insurance went up 44 percent last year, and recently she was informed that it will go up another 31 percent beginning in 1994.

Other seniors are worried, too. More than 150 of them, ranging in age from about 65 to 100, attended one of two public meetings of the Insurance Subcommittee of the House Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee. One meeting was in Fergus Falls Oct. 27; the other, in St. Cloud Oct. 29.

Both meetings were moderated by subcom-

mittee chair Rep. Ted Winter (DFL-Fulda) and focused on community rating, a step the Legislature took recently to equalize Medicare supplement premium rates.

Background information on community rating was provided by Tom Pender, a legislative analyst for the House. "With the passage of the MinnesotaCare law in 1992, all insurance companies offering Medicare supplement insurance must 'community rate' their policies," he said.

"Until this year, almost all providers of Medicare supplement coverage charged premium rates that varied based upon age and gender. Now, all seniors who have the same policy form are charged the same premium rates regardless of age, gender, or health status."

The averaging of previously varied premium rates, he said, tends to increase the rates paid by younger seniors and reduce the rates paid by older seniors.

"Under community rating, a person's premium rate will increase in the future due to medical cost inflation, but not because of moving into a higher age category," said Pender.

Rolla Parker of Fergus Falls asked whether the cost for the same coverage from different companies would be the same?

Rep. Greg Davids (IR-Preston) explained that because community rating applies separately to each insurer, different insurers can charge different prices.

Pender added that there are still some differences in rates permitted under the new law. For example, different rates can be charged if the benefits are different. Geographic variations are still permitted so that if insurers want to charge rates in the Twin Cities that differ from those charged in outstate Minnesota, for example, they can — with permission from the state regulator. And companies can charge different rates based on healthy lifestyles, he said.

In light of this, Rep. Tony Onnen (IR-Cokato) advised seniors to search for the best buy and to get some advice from experts they can trust.

In spite of opportunities to shop around, Bill De Jong, a Fergus Falls resident who retired from the insurance business, pointed out that "it's common for people to deny themselves" in order to pay their insurance premiums.

John Gross, an analyst with the state Department of Commerce, agreed. He said his own grandparents, who lived to be 89 and 92, were frugal to the point of eating cat food in order to maintain their insurance payments. "Insurance," he told the seniors, "is out there to help you, but if you can't afford it, there are other alternatives."

One is the Minnesota Comprehensive

Health Association (MCHA), our state health insurance pool, said Gross.

"It's been around since 1976, and guarantees Minnesota residents health insurance regardless of health status," he said. "It's a very comprehensive product, and it's very easy to get into. . . . And you might save yourself some money," he said.

Leona Zormeier, a St. Cloud resident who is a member of AARP and the Central Minnesota Senior Federation, asked what authority the Legislature has in controlling the costs of Medicare supplement plans.

The Legislature impacts directly upon what that cost is going to be, said Onnen. "The Department of Commerce is there to enforce whatever the Legislature passes and the governor signs."

Gross told the audience that his department looks at every rate change, and if the company cannot justify it, the change cannot be made. The Legislature also impacts the amount of profit companies can make, he said, so for every dollar an insurance company takes in, 65 percent, on an annual basis, must go back to the consumer in benefits.

On the other hand, he said, if a company has lost money on a particular policy, it is entitled to a rate change. Last year, for example, one insurance company paid out \$1.65 for every dollar it took in, he said.

If we didn't allow rate changes in such cases, we would lose companies to other states, leaving ourselves with fewer choices, he said. Out of 2,000 insurance companies in the United States, only 20 are in Minnesota.

"The question that has not been addressed in the health care debate is, 'Why are the costs so high?' said Davids. "All we seem to talk about is, 'How do we pay the premiums?' Community rating is just a premium payment shift on how we do it. It doesn't address why the costs are so high."

"Before we can get this problem under control," said Davids, "we have to ask the questions: Why do doctors charge whatever they can charge? Why do hospitals charge what they charge? Why do drug companies have 800 percent markups? Why do insurance companies charge what they want to charge? Why do trial attorneys sue for everything? There's plenty of blame to go around. . . ." he said.

Questions?

Questions about Medicare supplement coverage: Department of Commerce, (612) 296-2488 (option 2).
Questions about HMO Medicare coverage: Department of Health, (612) 282-5600.



LABOR

Red tape and workers' comp

FERGUS FALLS — "I don't know where I'm going to go from here."

So concluded the highly emotional testimony of one injured worker before the House Labor-Management Relations Committee Oct. 28 on the second day of the Minnesota Plains Public Forums.

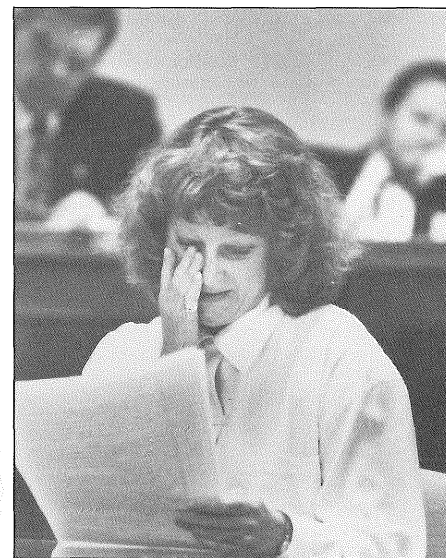
Legislators came to hear about problems with the state's workers' compensation laws, and they heard plenty from employers and employees alike.

From employers such as the Metz Baking Co. of Fergus Falls, the committee heard Minnesota's workers' comp system is too costly when compared with nearby North Dakota's system. From the employees standpoint, several workers said the system is an endless nightmare of medical, legal, and insurance hassles.

But it was the testimony of Mary Germundson Conito, the woman with no place to turn, that dominated the hearing.

A licensed practical nurse (LPN) for more than 20 years, Conito suffered a back injury in March of 1991 while on the job at a Fergus Falls hospital. Now, unable to stand, sit or walk for more than four hours at a time because of the accident, the mother of nine could lose her home. Plus, she stands to lose the ability to repay \$3,500 in loans from her parents over the last few months, she said.

As several other injured workers and em-



Mary Germundson Conito wiped away a tear as she told members of the House Labor-Management Relations Committee how she came to be injured. Conito is a nurse at Lake Region Hospital in Fergus Falls. Several area residents testified before the committee Oct. 28 about workers' compensation insurance.

ployers testified, Conito told the committee that Minnesota's workers' compensation system needs to be fixed.

Her main complaint: "All the red tape."

For example, doctors and neurologists at three medical facilities, including the Mayo Clinic, agreed that an arthritic condition in Conito's back — as well as a bulging disc in her neck — prevented her from working full-time. However, an insurance company doctor who examined Conito briefly last May said she was fit to return to work full-time.

That one dissenting opinion resulted in a legal battle over Conito's workers' compensation benefits, which were cut off with the doctor's diagnosis. Conito contended she was eligible for payments. Finally, she settled this fall for half of the amount of workers' compensation benefits she says she was entitled to. That is the equivalent of about two-thirds of the wages she'd have earned if she'd been working full-time.

Now, Conito told the committee, she's planning to quit her part-time job at the hospital. That's because her employer believes she can work more than four hours a day, and because she recently received the first unsatisfactory performance review of her career.

With her work history tarnished, she says it will be very hard for her to find another job.

"Would you hire me?" she asked committee members. "Do you think I'd be a big risk to hire?"



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Neighborly annexations

ST. CLOUD — No matter how many times the law is changed, local governments will likely never agree on a mutually acceptable process of land annexation.

That was the thrust of testimony before the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee in St. Cloud Oct. 29. There, two dozen witnesses representing cities and townships lined up to voice their concerns with Minnesota's annexation law for unincorporated township land.

The interpretation of the law was last changed in March of 1993. That's when a state attorney general's opinion held, in effect, that a city may by ordinance annex township areas of 60 acres or less if all property owners petition — even if the annexation would not otherwise have been permitted.

Furthermore, a district court recently ruled

that an annexation ordinance adopted by a city according to law takes precedence over existing agreements for orderly annexation.

But all that did little to smooth ruffled feathers between some cities and townships over past annexations.

For example, DeWayne Mareck, of St. Cloud Township in Stearns County, said cooperative annexation agreements can be worked out. "But if it's what townships perceive as a takeover, that's not acceptable," Mareck said.

But cities sometimes the view matters differently.

"We need to tap into this tax base that we're being denied," argued John Ellenbecker, a St. Cloud City Council member and chair of the city's Coalition for Annexation. The present law doesn't permit annexation of intensely developed areas, he noted.

In the end, most witnesses agreed the only way to make annexation of any kind work is through cooperation and collaboration between the two forms of local government.

"Planning is a lot of the key to success," concluded Lothar Wolter Jr., president of the Minnesota Association of Townships.



TAXES

Drowning in taxes

ST. CLOUD — Wallace O'Brien passed out several scenic photographs to help make his point during a Property Tax Reform Task Force Hearing Oct. 28.



St. Cloud resident Harriet Braun held her daughter, Heidi, as she voiced her concerns about outcome-based education. She spoke before the House Education Committee's Education Standards Subcommittee Oct. 28.

In the first was lakeshore property dotted with docks and boat lifts every hundred feet or so — typical of many lakes in the Gull Lake area near Brainerd.

In the second set of photographs was the 3,000 feet of undeveloped lakeshore property he owns on Whitefish Lake near Cross Lake — land that looks a lot like what you might find in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

If the state's tax laws aren't changed, O'Brien said he and others like him will be forced to break up their large tracts of land to reduce their overwhelming tax burdens. And that will lead Whitefish to look a lot like many other lakes.

"We're quite literally being taxed off our property," said O'Brien, who was also speaking for other lakeshore owners.

O'Brien said his non-homesteaded tax bill payable in 1993 was \$8,529 — nearly three times what it was a decade ago. "In my case, it's pretty simple. I can't afford it," he said, adding that he budgeted just \$3,733 per year for property taxes when he retired 10 years ago.

But more important than the economic impact is the effect it will have on the environment. The photograph he passed out showing the crowded lakeshore was of the property adjacent to his.

"The problem is that there are not many of these relatively large pieces of land that are left," he said, explaining that he is a third generation owner of the 30 acres his family inherited. "All they [he and others like him] want to do is enjoy it and retire and pass it on to their children."

Currently, the value under \$72,000 of such seasonal property is taxed at 2 percent and the value over \$72,000 at 2.5 percent. Homesteaded residential property is taxed at 1 percent of the first \$72,000 of value and 2 percent for the value over \$72,000.

The effect of those high rates on such seasonal property has been exacerbated by rapidly escalating assessments of lake property. O'Brien said the assessment of his property — now listed at a market value of \$800,000 — has increased exponentially in recent years. Similarly, most other lakeshore property owners in Crow Wing County have seen their assessments nearly double, or more than double, in the past five years, he said.

Recognizing the problem of escalating assessments, the 1993 Legislature approved a measure that limits assessment increases to the greater of two factors: either 10 percent over the previous year, or one-third of the increase between the previous and current tax years.

Nonetheless, one member suggested that

assessments for such seasonal property be frozen until the property is put on the market for sale. And after the meeting, O'Brien said he hopes the Legislature will consider setting the class rate for such land at a reduced level.

Task force members took no action, but pledged to examine the issue over the next few months. The task force was created earlier this year to study the state's property tax system in order to make recommendations for change to the 1994 Legislature.

O'Brien said he hopes the Legislature can change the tax policy soon.

"If the relatively small tracts of open spaces left on these lakes disappear we will have traded a whole future for a few years' worth of public revenue dollars," he said.

Refinancing the schools

Each year, the state sends millions of dollars raised primarily through income and sales taxes to the state's school systems and city and county governments.

The arrangement has kept Minnesota's property taxes, which finance a large share of such costs, among the lowest in the country for lower-valued homes.

But the Minnesota Business Partnership (MBP) and others are advocating a major shift in Minnesota's taxing and local government funding scheme that has been in place for more than 20 years.

They want a lot of that money now going to cities channeled to schools to help pay for students' core curriculum costs. And they also want to make the state's homestead property tax credit "income-adjusted" so

wealthier homeowners would receive less of a tax break. Those savings to the state would, in turn, also be channeled to pay students' "core" instruction costs.

That, in a nutshell, and with no new taxes, is the partnership plan as outlined by MBP Executive Director Tom Triplett before a joint meeting of the Education Committee's Education Finance Division and the Property Tax Reform Task Force Oct. 28.

But city officials and leaders from throughout west central Minnesota, brandishing bar graphs and a myriad of arguments, showed up en masse to oppose the plan.

Their arguments followed two main themes:

1) Reducing state aid to cities would dramatically increase city property taxes, which would cause businesses to flee just outside city boundaries where tax rates are lower. That would cause city sprawl and an assortment of environmental problems.

2) Reducing aid would further hurt cities' ability to pay for basic services, such as police and fire protection, and jeopardize citizen safety.

"We don't think crime is a lesser priority," said Tim Flaherty, a lobbyist with the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities. "We really aren't against the schools, but we do have some concerns about the proposal."

And despite the implication that cities are spending state government aid on unnecessary services, several city officials said their towns offer nothing more than the basics.

"There's nothing fancy in Breckenridge," said Blaine Hill, city clerk in Breckenridge, Minn. He added that Breckenridge's "city

car" is one confiscated by local police following a speeding violation.

The basic tenet of the MBP plan is for the state to fund at least 70 percent of school costs as was the case more than 20 years when the "Minnesota Miracle" funding scheme was first enacted. Since then, the state's share has slipped, leaving schools to rely more heavily on local property taxes.

The increase in state funding would allow the state to provide all funding for core instruction and support services such as school buses, libraries and counseling.

That would leave local property owners to pay for "discretionary services" such as elective classes that fall outside the core, athletics, and costs associated with a school board and superintendent.

Triplett estimated that the proposal would cost the state an estimated \$500 million more per year, depending upon how core instruction is defined. And that would be tied to the state's graduation rule, which, when adopted, will set out the basic parameters of what students should know by the time they graduate.

But Flaherty of the coalition remains skeptical of the plan and of the pledge for no new taxes. Although the goal of raising the state's share of school costs to 70 percent is a noble one, it's unlikely the state would ever sustain the effort, he said. And that would lead to higher taxes for everyone.

"Our point is simple," he said after the meeting. "You can't trust the state to stick with the program from year to year."



The Crayons, a St. Cloud singing group, performed for legislators at a welcoming luncheon held at the St. Cloud Holiday Inn Oct. 28. The children, third through eighth graders, attend Sts. Peter, Paul and Michael School in St. Cloud.

Town meeting in St. Cloud . . .

Roadway expansion, video gambling among issues

More than 500 people braved winter-like winds Oct. 28 to attend the Minnesota Plains Town Meeting with members of the Minnesota House of Representatives in St. Cloud's Apollo High School auditorium.

The standing-room-only crowd took advantage of the chance to ask questions of House members and make comments about conditions in their communities. Topics of concern included transportation funding, video gambling, education funding, and stray voltage from overhead power lines.

Sartell Mayor Bob Pogatschnik was concerned about the rapid growth of the St. Cloud area and the need for the development of an adequate roadway network to accommodate that growth.

State demographer reports indicate that this area, which includes five cities and eight townships within three counties, will be the fastest growing area over the next 30 years, said Pogatschnik.

He said that forecasts for the year 2015 include a 40 percent increase in population to 130,000, and a 52 percent increase in employment from 48,000 to 73,000. Furthermore, said Pogatschnik, more than 20 additional square miles will be developed for housing, business, and industry.

"Roadways are going to need significant improvements for capacity," he said. "And we're going to have to construct those roads in new corridors to handle increased traffic demands."

Pogatschnik urged the Legislature to work with the governor on providing much-needed



At the Minnesota Plains Town Meeting in St. Cloud Oct. 28, area residents asked a variety of questions, ranging from the effects of stray voltage to funding for public transit. The meeting was held in Apollo High School's auditorium.

transportation funding for the metro area surrounding St. Cloud.

Unfair competition for entertainment dollars prompted Dean Anderson, owner and innkeeper of the Holiday Inn in St. Cloud, to ask House members to support a video pulltab proposal.

People involved in the hospitality industry — owners and employees of motels, restaurants, and bars — are good corporate citizens, said Anderson. He added that they pay taxes in their communities and the state, create jobs, and support "multitudes" of sports activities and worthy causes.

He said the expanding casino industry is not required to play by the same rules. And when this competition expands further into

the restaurant and bar business by developing hotels and conference centers, he said, they will continue to price some of their products under cost in order to draw people to their casinos. "We cannot compete with this kind of pricing."

The industry, said Anderson, asks to be allowed to put from two to six video pulltab machines in their establishments. The machines, he said, would be controlled by the state, and the proceeds would be shared by the state, charities, and the owner-operators. The machines would phase out the existing paper pulltabs, a form of gambling that invites problems.

The proposal, said Anderson, does not completely level the competitive playing field, but helps Minnesota's hospitality business to compete.

Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Mpls) said that the House has not taken a position on video gambling, but assured Anderson that legislators would be listening to all aspects of the problem next session.

Clear Lake Mayor Roger Kantor had questions about excess levy referendums, state funding for education, and how the two are now tied together.

Rep. Jerry Bauerly (DFL-Sauk Rapids) said the effort is to provide equal education across the state regardless of the wealth of the school district the student lives in and the wealth of the student's parents.

Regarding state funding, Penny Zook, a school board member from District 742, said putting mandates on a portion of state funding is "taking away money from the educa-



Members of the Prairie Island Coalition Against Nuclear Storage brought their protest of NSP's proposed high-level radioactive waste storage facility to the St. Cloud town meeting at Apollo High School Oct. 28. NSP is seeking approval to store nuclear waste at its Prairie Island plant on the Mississippi River near Red Wing.

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tion of our children." She asked House members to put the focus in education back on the students. "Please consider taking away all mandates and letting us manage our own sites. I think we can do a better job," she said.

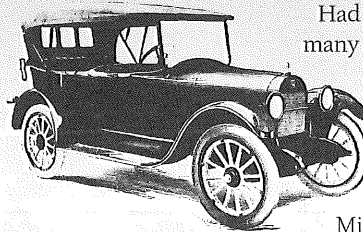
Stray voltage has been a worry to Joe Kenning, a dairy farmer from the St. Cloud area, since 1979. "We've got a very serious problem out there," he said.

Kenning said he sold his dairy herd in August because the blood cell count in the milk from many of his cows exceeded allowable limits — a condition he said was caused by stray voltage. "We're trying to produce good quality food, and it's impossible with this electrical field in the ground," said Kenning. He wondered what the Legislature was going to do about it.

Speaker-designate Irv Anderson (DFL-Int'l Falls) assured Kenning that the House Agriculture Committee would look into the problem, take testimony from people in the area, and hopefully, with the Senate, come up with a solution.

Other residents talked about concerns such as funding for public transit, the creation and maintenance of permanent, full-time employment, child support, small business and workers' compensation, term limits, and the storage of high-level nuclear waste at Prairie Island on the Mississippi River near Red Wing, Minn.

Do you know?



Had fate been a little more kind to Sam Pandolfo, many of us may have been driving "Pan" cars instead of Fords and Chevrolets. And St. Cloud, Minn., instead of Detroit, could possibly have been a major hub of the automobile industry.

It all began early this century when the former teacher turned insurance salesman from Mississippi became mesmerized by the automobile, as was much of the country.

"He wanted a car with high clearance for traveling the back roads; his experience on the road while selling insurance convinced him of that requirement," wrote John Dominik in the winter 1982 issue of *Minnesota History*. "His car should also make some provision for the overnight comfort of the driver caught after dark in the areas where hotels and even towns were few and far between."

He later told his design engineers to incorporate the high clearance and "sleeping car body" features into his "Pan" cars, but the lack of an actual working model didn't stop him from aggressively selling stock in the Pan Motor Company.

He chose St. Cloud as his headquarters, he said, because of the support he received from local businessmen and because of the "immense number of skilled mechanics" in the area, as well as the scenic terrain.

The highlight of his promotional effort was a massive barbecue that coincided with St. Cloud's Fourth of July celebration in 1917. According to press reports, 15,434 pounds of beef and 8,000 loaves of bread were purchased to feed the masses that had gathered to view the newly assembled Pan cars, which were painted red, white and blue for the occasion.

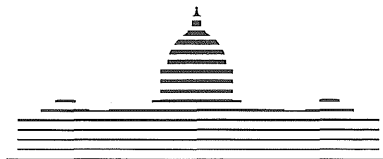
Money poured in, but so, too, did a band of federal investigators. Eventually, Pandolfo was found guilty of four counts of mail fraud and served two-and-one-half years in prison — despite the fact that the Pan Motor Company was up and running.

"... But for government interference [the company] would probably have been making cars in large numbers at least since July last," stated an editorial in the *St. Cloud Daily Journal-Press*.

Dominik wrote that the actions of presiding Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, whose rulings crippled the defense, would probably not be tolerated today.

But the question of whether Sam Pandolfo was huckster or visionary remains open-ended.

"In 1959, a year before his death, he was stopped for speeding, and gave his age as 53," stated an entry in the Pandolfo exhibit at Stearns County's Heritage Center. "He was 83."



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MINNESOTA INDEX

Fergus Falls and St. Cloud

Percent of migrant workers who come to the Red River Valley for the growing season who find work	90
Number of migrant families in Polk County, 1987	297
in 1992	803
Number of lakes in Otter Tail County	1,048
Population of Fergus Falls, 1991 estimate	12,362
Decrease in population since 1960	1,386
Percent of population 65 and over	21.4
Number of Fergus Falls residents 85 and over	399
Number employed by Fergus Falls Regional Treatment Center	542
By Fergus Falls Community College	101
Percent of Fergus Falls rental apartments in buildings with more than 5 units	0
In Fergus Falls, 1990, median:	
value of homes	\$45,700
monthly mortgage cost	\$508
monthly gross rent	\$312
Number of hospital beds in Fergus Falls	100
Nursing home beds	361
Number of days between killing frosts in Fergus Falls	158
Percent of duck breeding habitat in the Prairie Pothole Region	10
Percent of region's contribution to duck production in an average year	50-75
Purchase price in 1853 for the area of today's St. Cloud business district	\$100
Number of households in St. Cloud area, 1990	31,567
Number expected in 2000	40,200
Number expected in 2010	50,400
Percentage of St. Cloud area households consisting of	
persons living alone, 1990	23.8
Percent living with roommates	12.9
Percent married with children	27.9
Percent of St. Cloud households with incomes under \$10,000, 1990	18.9
In Minnesota as a whole	13.8
Total employment in St. Cloud area, 1992	85,158
Percent of wetlands lost in Stearns County since mid-1800s	80
Number of SCSU students in 1993 who hail from Minnesota's Cook County	1
From Hennepin County	1,890

Sources: Otter Tail County Tourism Association; St Cloud HRA; Minnesota Housing Finance Agency; Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development; Tri-Valley Opportunity Council, Inc.; Stearns County Historical Society; Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.

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Director
Grant Moos

Editor
Peg Hamerston

Assistant Editor
John T. Tschida

Writers
Ruth Hammond, Jim Houtsma,
Mary Ann Schoenberger

Art & Production Coordinator
Paul Battaglia

Photographers
Tom Olmscheid, Laura Phillips

Staff Assistant
Matthew A. Niewohner

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