

'Visioning' for rural towns

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REN

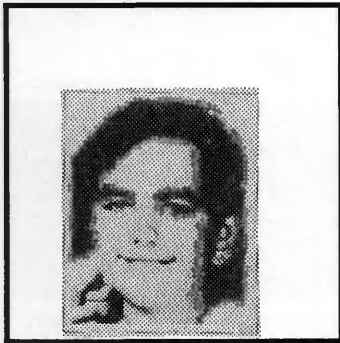
ILLINOIS RURAL ELECTRIC NEWS

MAY 1994



Fairfield printing control
firm builds world business
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MISSING



LISA MICHELLE STARNES

LAST SEEN: 08/08/92 EYES: Hazel
 FROM: La Porte, TX HEIGHT: 5'3"
 DOB: 12/27/78 WEIGHT: 110
 WHITE FEMALE HAIR: Black



CHRISTINA MAY GAGNON

LAST SEEN: 09/13/93 EYES: Blue
 FROM: Anaconda, MT HEIGHT: 5'0"
 DOB: 05/20/77 WEIGHT: 95
 WHITE FEMALE HAIR: Brown

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Illinois Rural Electric News

House and Senate support electric cooperatives

Rural electric leaders moved quickly in February to counter Clinton administration budget proposals that would break an agreement made last fall and slash the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) lending programs. After months of work last year, rural electric workers out a five-year agreement on interest rates and loan funding with the administration. The rural electric workers agreed to major revisions in the REA lending program to help in the effort to reduce the federal deficit.

When the administration's budget proposal hit Congress in early February, it contained provisions that would drastically cut back on funds available in the restructured lending program.

Rural electric leaders responded, and they found strong support in Congress for restoration of the funding to the level agreed upon last fall. "We were told that a long-term agreement had been reached," Rep. Richard Durbin (D) of the 20th District in Illinois told REA and other U.S. Department of Agriculture officials. Durbin, who is chairman of the House Appropriations Committee's agriculture subcommittee, added, "But this year's budget proposal contains deep cuts in the REA lending program. Can you tell me how we might explain that to the co-ops?"

Rep. Joe Skeen (R) of New Mexico pointed out that the administration is asking rural electric workers and other REA borrowers to take on even larger economic development responsibilities at the same time it proposes to slash the lending program. "I don't see how you're going to do it," he said.

Durbin noted that investor-owned and municipal utilities get substantially more federal assistance through tax breaks and tax-free bonds than cooperatives do. "Has the administration asked these other types of utilities to make similar sacrifices?" Durbin asked. "We have to ask for some balance and fairness in federal policy—particularly when something is done for the purpose of deficit reduction," he added.

In the weeks following the budget proposal, committees in both the House and Senate rejected the administration's REA funding cuts, thus reaffirming the cooperatives' agreement made with the administration last fall. The House and Senate will continue to deal with the budget during the next several weeks. So far it is evident that the rural electric workers have strong support in Congress. Rural electric workers will continue their efforts to assure the future of the five-year agreement made last fall.

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Cover: Dale Warren (second from left), manager of Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative, observes operation of a product of Web Printing Controls with company employees, from left: Kerry Loss, John Shute, and Bruce Featherling. See article beginning on page 6.

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Kenneth R. Webb (seated left) of Tunnel Hill has been reelected president of Southern Illinois Power Co-operative (SIPC). Raymond C. Mulholland (seated center) of Marissa was reelected vice president, and George R. Inman (seated right) of Grand Chain was reelected secretary-treasurer. Standing is Tim Reeves, executive vice president and general manager.

SIPC produces another good year

Southern Illinois Power Co-operative (SIPC) continues to hold its place among the country's outstanding power supply cooperatives. During the cooperative's annual meeting March 31 at the Lake of Egypt headquarters, officials of the organization updated representatives of the three member cooperatives about SIPC's financial success in 1993.

President Kenneth R. Webb of Tunnel Hill said, "This is the 12th year in a row that SIPC has been in the black. The financial side of our cooperative, when compared with other generation and transmission cooperatives, continues to be among the best in the nation." He added that the cooperative had a net margin in 1993 of \$3,759,534, compared to a budget projection of \$3,213,696.

SIPC supplies power to its three member cooperatives: Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association, Steeleville; South-

eastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, Eldorado; and Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative, Dongola. Combined, the three distribution electric cooperatives serve more than 40,000 consumer members in a 19-county region of Southern Illinois.

Webb said that SIPC continues to increase its equity, which stands at 25.23 percent. The consolidated equity of the entire SIPC system is 36.9 percent, he added. "We have all heard the expression 'Make hay while the sun shines.' This can also be applied to equity. While our cooperative is now in a period of stable and competitive rates with moderate load growth, our power requirements study completed in 1993 shows the need for new construction in the not-too-distant future. Any new generation could have the effect of decreasing our equity and increasing our rates. We at SIPC want to be in the best financial position when we are faced with

adding new generation to our rate base. SIPC will continue its forward-looking financial planning so that we will be ready for both the planned and unpredictable future," he said.

Manager Tim Reeves reported on the cooperative's coal supply management, noting that the cooperative in 1993 awarded contracts to two coal companies to supplement an existing coal supply contract. These contracts will provide the cooperative with all of its coal needs through 1994, Reeves said.

Reeves also said SIPC had filed a lawsuit contesting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) allocation of sulfur dioxide allowances. Reeves said the cooperative believes its allocation should have been based on a different section of the Clean Air Act Amendments than the section the USEPA used. "At this time, we are discussing a settlement with the USEPA," he added.

George R. Inman of Grand Chain, secretary-treasurer, said electric sales to members in 1993 totalled 966,930 megawatt-hours, up sharply from the 1992 total of 911,907. He said demand increased 4.0 percent and kilowatt-hour sales climbed 6.03 percent in 1993 over 1992. "The weather was a major factor, with the winter load reflecting a 13 percent average increase in heating degree days and the summer load with a 22.5 percent increase in cooling degree days," he added.

Inman said the cooperative was successful in 1993 in repricing its Federal Financing Bank loans, which will mean a total savings of more than \$31 million over the life of the notes.

Reeves presented capital credit checks totalling \$825,648.48 to the three member systems. Southeastern Illinois Electric received \$481,757.70; Egyptian Electric, \$196,771.96; and Southern Illinois Electric, \$147,118.82. The capital credits are for the year 1976.

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Bruce Fetherling, left, vice president of manufacturing, and John Shute, plant manager, explains how one of the company's CCR units works.

Business grows from garage to large Fairfield plant

A business that started out as purely a service in a two-car garage in a Chicago suburb has developed into a full-fledged manufacturing operation in Fairfield (Wayne County). The plant is served by Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative, and the cooperative's economic development electric rate helped make it possible for the company to push employment past 100 people.

Web Printing Controls, Inc., located just south of Fairfield, is

housed in a 93,000-square-foot structure that has been added onto several times to help accommodate its growth. After moving to Fairfield from Hanover Park, the business was first set up in an old building in downtown Fairfield, where the workforce varied between three and four people. It didn't take long to outgrow that facility, and plans were made to move to the present site.

"The company was founded in 1971," says Bruce Fetherling,

vice president of manufacturing, "by my brother, Dean, to service and install auxiliary control systems in the web offset printing trade. We moved here partly because this was the old home town, partly because there was a good labor force here and partly because land was affordable. We also just wanted to bring some jobs downstate, if we could."

Offset printing, the "new kid on the block" at that time, has almost completely supplanted

WPC employee Jan Brendal tests a color-to-color registration system (CCR) which is a complex system of electronic components. The unit is sold all over the world.

letterpress printing, which was just about the only way to get ink on paper in quantity 35 years ago. Web printing refers to the fact that instead of being printed on individual sheets of paper, images are printed on long rolls — or webs — and cut to size after going through the press. While this offered some economies and speeded up the process a bit, it brought with it problems of its own, some of them unforeseen by the press manufacturers.

The abrupt transition from letterpress to offset printing, and the added emphasis on printing on webs instead of individual sheets, opened a sudden "window of opportunity" for people who could foresee the coming problems the quick conversion was going to cause and devise ways to solve them. This was the market that Fetherling stepped into.

For its first few years, the company concentrated on installing, servicing, rebuilding and moving auxiliary control systems for web offset presses. Then the company started moving and reinstalling used presses in the Midwest.

In 1976, Herman Gnuechtel was hired as chief electronics engineer. He is now president. At that time, WPC began its research and development program (R&D) that has propelled it to the position it now enjoys.

During the next few years, Gnuechtel was able to develop three mainstream products (web break detectors, cutoff controls and web guides) that enabled the company to undertake an expensive R&D program that produced an ink remote system for the Planeta sheet-fed press for the Royal Zenith Company.

(Continued on page 18)



BRIEFLY

1994: A cooperative year

The news was bad in 1844 for weavers toiling in the cotton mills of Rochdale, England—there would be no pay raises that year. But bad breaks often produce good ideas, and 28 of the ill-paid workers hit on one that would help lower their cost of living and create a whole new way of doing business. They found a space in the town's warehouse district, pooled their modest stocks of sugar, butter, flour and oatmeal, put together a small selection of boots and jackets and opened the world's first cooperative. The concept was simple: They would return the profits to the members who shopped there. This year, U.S. cooperatives will recognize the 150th anniversary of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society by celebrating Co-op Year. There's plenty to celebrate because the cooperative way of commerce is thriving. Nearly 1,000 consumer-owned electric co-ops in the U.S. are still in business since their creation in the 1930s and 1940s to bring power to farms and rural areas that profit-seeking, big-city utilities chose not to serve. And more than 100 million Americans belong to cooperatives that

David Finley named general manager at Coles-Moultrie Electric



Finley

David G. Finley, 49, a director at Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative, Mattoon, since 1990 and board president for the past year, has been named manager. Finley, a grain farmer since 1963, succeeds Craig DeBower, who resigned late last year to manage a Pennsylvania electric cooperative. Finley graduated summa cum laude from Lake Land College in Mattoon in 1992 with a degree in management with an emphasis on accounting. He attended Eastern Illinois University in the mid-1960s, working on a business degree until returning to full-time farming. Finley and his wife, Rebecca, have two children: Chad and Jo Ann Ray.

Dave Champion elected secretary-treasurer of NRTC board of directors



Champion

Wm. David Champion, Jr., general manager of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, Paxton, has been elected secretary-treasurer of the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC) board of directors. The election was held during NRTC's March board meeting in Washington. He is the first

provide everything from housing to child care. Co-op Year is organized by several organizations, including the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the National Cooperative Business Association. The participants will work to educate the American public about cooperative businesses.

Bergland retires from co-op association

After more than 30 years in Washington—the last nine as general manager of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)—Bob Bergland says it's time to go back to the farm. Bergland, 65, retired in March as leader of NRECA, the national service organization for the nation's 1,000 consumer-owned rural electric cooperatives. He plans to return to his family farm in Roseau, Minn., to spend more time working on his hobby, furniture building, and to dabble in local politics. But, he says, "I'm not going to run for anything." Bergland is no stranger to politics. After taking over NRECA's reins in 1984, Bergland used his considerable political savvy to protect federal funding for consumer-owned utilities from the budget cleavers

of the Reagan and Bush administrations. Those lobbying skills and knowledge of the inner-workings of the federal government were forged by three terms in Congress and a term as former President Carter's Agriculture Secretary. Bergland's work for NRECA earned respect from Democrats and Republicans alike. Gary Byrne, head of USDA's Rural Electrification Administration (REA) during the Bush years, told the Associated Press that Bergland "was and is absolutely committed to the importance of the rural electrification movement for rural development." REA lends money to rural co-ops for construction and other utility projects. Bergland is succeeded by former Rep. Glenn English of Oklahoma.

Utility experiment could ease snow removal

Wicked winter weather in many parts of the country left some state and local road crews short of salt to take care of icy and snowy roads. But an experiment at a New York utility could help ease the salt crunch. In late 1994 or early 1995, New York State Electric and Gas will begin testing an experimental scrubber at its Milliken station that's able to produce as much as 5,000 tons of calcium chloride—a substance that's been proven useful in snow and ice removal.

Illinois officer of one of the major electric cooperative national organizations: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation or NRTC. Champion was first elected to the NRTC board in 1989. Eastern Illini Electric is a member of NRTC and provides telecommunications services through its Unlimited Visions subsidiary. Champion has been manager of EIEC since it was formed in 1987 following the consolidation of Illini Electric Cooperative and Eastern Illinois Power Cooperative. He was manager of Illini Electric for more than three years prior to the consolidation. He has worked in the rural electrification program for 20-plus years.

Agencies join to benefit beginning farmers

The Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) and the Illinois Farm Development Authority (IFDA) are working together to provide qualified beginning farmers and/or young farmers with financing to establish or maintain their farming operation. FmHA State Director Wally Furrow and IFDA Executive Director David Wirth have signed a memorandum of understanding between their respective agencies to coordinate financial assistance from new and existing loan and bond programs to assist beginning farmers in Illinois. For example, the FmHA would provide a downpayment for the purchase of a farm through its new Beginning Farmer Downpayment Loan Program with either a guaranteed or direct loan to an applicant meeting the criteria for a beginning farmer. The IFDA may make a loan to the applicant through either its Beginning Farmer Bond program or the Young Farmer Guarantee Program for the remainder of the purchase of the farm. The two agencies have been working together and exchanging information and ideas to address the finan-

The \$160 million project is part of the U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Coal Technology Program. Co-sponsors include NALCO FuelTech, Stebbins Engineering and Manufacturing, the Electric Power Research Institute and Consolidation Coal Co. Bernard Koch, director of project development at Consul, says calcium chloride has two advantages over salt. First, it takes less calcium chloride than salt to treat roadways, and it also works at lower temperatures than salt. Second, calcium chloride doesn't cause rust to the undersides of cars nor does it corrode the pavement, which reduces the cost of road repairs. The calcium chloride produced in the Milliken tests will come in liquid form, though it can be solidified. Local governments experimenting with the substance combine it with salt in low temperatures to increase the salt's effectiveness. It can also be used in the summer on dirt roads to cut down on dust. NYSE&G has been working on sales contracts to market the substance.

Clinton program targets rural areas for assistance

The Clinton Administration has unveiled details of its Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities revitalization program. The EZ/EC program is designed to help both rural and urban areas create jobs, build housing and rebuild community infrastructures through

federal grant money, tax benefits and access to certain federal programs. Three empowerment zones and 30 enterprise communities will be specifically designated for rural areas. "This program, in our opinion, is the first step in rebuilding communities in America's poverty-stricken inner cities and rural heartlands," said Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy in a speech before the annual meeting of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in New Orleans. "It represents a new approach to the old problems of distressed communities." Espy will make the final designations after consulting with the President's Community Enterprise Board, which is made up of cabinet members and advisers to President Clinton. Communities interested in participating have until June 30 to apply. To get an application to receive more details about the program, contact a state office of the Farmers Home Administration or call 202-690-1045.

New guide to help farmers meet deadlines

With the maze of bureaucratic red tape surrounding government assistance programs, farmers often miss application deadlines and lose their eligibility for much-needed funds. The Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG) has a new guide to help farmers keep deadlines straight. The Farmers' Guide to Disaster Assistance, published in February, lists disaster aid

cial needs of Illinois farmers for many years. The introduction of the new FmHA Beginning Farmer Program, however, has generated new opportunities for the agencies to combine forces to assist young and/or beginning farmers to become established. For details, contact the FmHA office that serves the county where the farming operation will be conducted.

Quincy/Adams County among five communities in pilot project

Gov. Jim Edgar announced that five Illinois communities, including Quincy/Adams County, will participate in the Community-Based Industrial Retention Project, a comprehensive economic development pilot project designed to foster business retention and expansion activities at the local level in partnership with the state. "The selected communities have all demonstrated the ability and commitment to work with local businesses and state government to ensure that Illinois industries and workers remain strong and competitive," the Governor said. The communities are Carol Stream; Collinsville; Quincy and Adams County, represented by the Great River Economic Development Foundation (Roger C. Mohrman, manager of Adams Electrical Co-Operative, Camp Point, is past president of the foundation.); the south suburban Chicago region, represented by the Cook County Department of Planning and Development and the Chicago Southland Economic Development Commission; and Springfield, represented by the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. "These communities, selected through a competitive process in which 1,500 communities were invited to participate," said DCCA Director Jan M. Grayson, "represent a rich diversity of economic development needs and resources which will help DCCA carry out its retention efforts throughout the state."

programs and their application deadlines. The 230-page book also describes each program, lists eligibility criteria, explains application procedures, and even advises applicants about what to do if their requests are turned down. "Farmers and business owners were promised millions of dollars in disaster aid by Congress last year," says Randi Roth, FLAG's executive director. "Much of the money is still out there, but people have to dig through mountains of government forms and red tape to get it." The guide was funded, in part, by Farm Aid, the organization formed by singer Willie Nelson and supported by an annual, star-studded concert. "The difficulty in dealing with all these programs is that it is too easy to become discouraged," Nelson said in a statement released with the guide. "Farmers, small businesses and farm suppliers need to know how they can cut through the red tape and get the relief they deserve under federal law." Since its first concert in 1985, Farm Aid has distributed more than \$11.5 million in grants to farm groups, hotlines, churches and social service agencies in 44 states. FLAG is a nonprofit law firm that gives legal advice to farmers and ranchers. The guide is available for \$12.95 to farmers, nonprofit organizations and public libraries. The cost for lawyers, law libraries, schools and governments is \$49.95. Send orders to FLAG, Disaster Guide, 46 East 4th St., Suite 1301, St. Paul, MN 55101.

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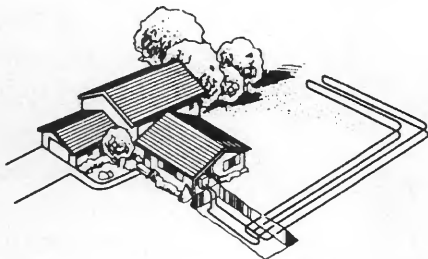
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- 1/2 wheel Mushroom Saga Cheese (about 1 lb.)
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- Variety of nuts
- Toasted seeds (e.g. sunflower)

Chill pears. Alternate wedges of Saga Blue and Mushroom Saga on platter, to form a wheel. Arrange candied fruit, nuts and seeds attractively over top of cheese. Chill. At serving time, bring cheese to room temperature (about 1 hour). Slice Tottori Pears into thin wedges or crosswise slices and arrange on platter with cheese. Serve as an appetizer.

ZESTY MUSHROOM DIP WITH CRUDITES

- 8 oz. Mushroom Saga Cheese
- 3-4 tablespoons milk
- 2 teaspoons horseradish
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives (or equivalent dried)
- 1/2 teaspoon dill weed

Scoop cheese out of rind. Combine with milk and horseradish, blending until smooth. Stir in chives and dill. Serve with a variety of crisp vegetables (e.g., cucumber slices, carrot and celery sticks, broccoli or cauliflower florets, pepper strips) and/or crackers. Makes about 1 1/4 cups dip.

CALIFORNIA WILD RICE-STUFFED TURKEY ROLLS

- 1 1/2 cups California wild rice
- 3 1/2 cups seasoned chicken broth
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup diced celery
- 1/3 cup diced green pepper
- 3 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 2 medium Hawaiian papayas, seeded and cubed
- 1/2 cup toasted slivered almonds
- 2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger (or equivalent dried)
- 8-10 slices smoked turkey (about 3 ozs. each)
- Island Papaya Sauce
- Hawaiian Papaya slices, for garnish

Combine wild rice and broth in saucepan. Bring to boil; cover and simmer 45-50 minutes. Meanwhile, saute' onion, celery and green pepper in butter until crisp-tender. Add to cooked rice with papaya, almonds and ginger. Toss lightly. To assemble turkey rolls, spoon about 1/3 cup rice mixture in center of each turkey slice. Roll up to enclose filling. Place, seam-side down, in shallow baking dish. Spoon any remaining rice mixture into baking dish with turkey rolls. Warm, covered, in 350° oven for 15-20 minutes. Garnish with papaya slices. Serve with warm papaya sauce. Makes 8-10 servings.

ISLAND PAPAYA SAUCE

- 1 medium Hawaiian papaya
- 3/4 cup seasoned chicken broth
- 3/4 cup white wine
- 1 1/2 teaspoons curry powder
- 6 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Halve and seed papaya, reserving seeds for salad dressing. Dice papaya and set aside. Combine broth and wine in saucepan. Bring to boil and cook until reduced by one-half, to about 3/4 cup. Place reduced liquid in blender with papaya and puree until smooth. Return mixture to saucepan; add curry and heat at low temperature. Add butter, 1 tablespoon at a time, stirring over low heat until melted. Stir in honey and lemon juice. Serve warm over Wild Rice-Stuffed Turkey Rolls. Makes about 2 cups sauce.

EXOTIC GREEN SALAD WITH PAPAYA SEED DRESSING

- 3/4 cup salad oil (e.g., olive, walnut)
- 1/4 cup white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon-style mustard
- 1 clove garlic
- 2 teaspoons minced onion
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon white wine
- Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons Hawaiian papaya seeds (from fresh papaya)
- Varied lettuces (e.g., leaf, endive, arugula, radicchio)
- 16 ozs. Saga Blue cheese, broken into chunks

Combine first 9 ingredients in blender or food processor until thoroughly mixed. (Makes about 1 1/4 cups.) Toss with crisp greens and chunks of Saga Blue to coat lightly. Serves 8-10.

PINK CHAMPAGNE SORBET WITH 20TH CENTURY PEARS

- 2-3 Tottori 20th Century Pears
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 2 1/2 cups pink champagne/sparkling wine
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- (Fresh mint, for garnish)

Chill pears. For sorbet, combine sugar and water in saucepan; bring to boil until sugar dissolves. Simmer 5 minutes. Cool. Combine syrup with champagne and lemon juice. Freeze in ice cream freezer according to manufacturer's directions. Or freeze in shallow metal pan* until almost firm. Break sorbet into chunks and process in food processor until smooth. Refreeze until firm. Makes 1 quart sorbet. To serve, slice pears into thin wedges (as shown) or rounds. Dip in additional champagne. Arrange in compotes, placing a scoop of sorbet in each center. Garnish with mint, if desired.

*Tip: Use metal ice cube trays, dividers in, to shortcut preparation.

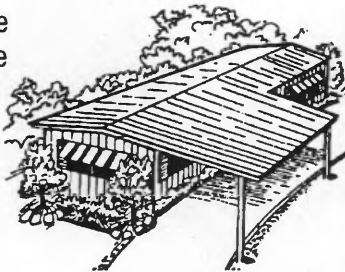


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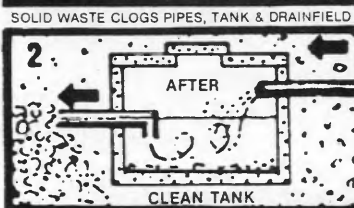
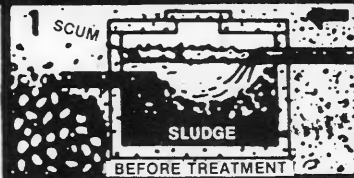
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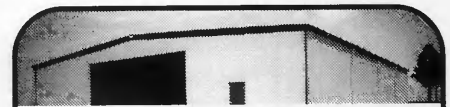


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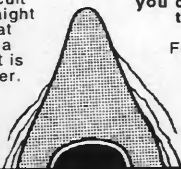
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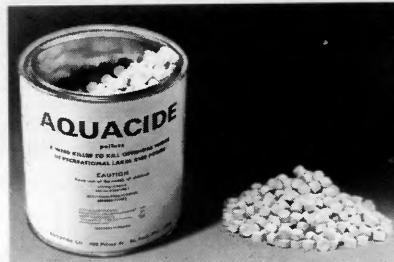


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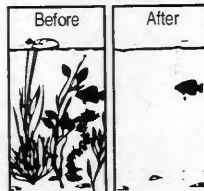
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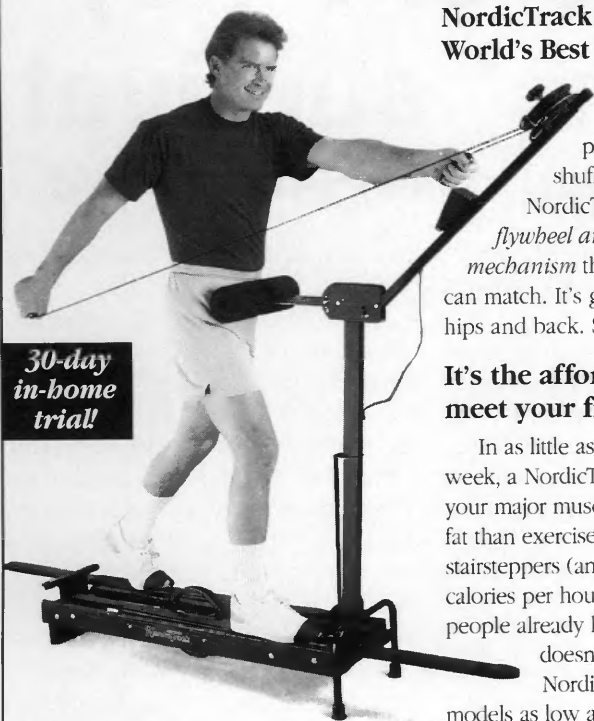
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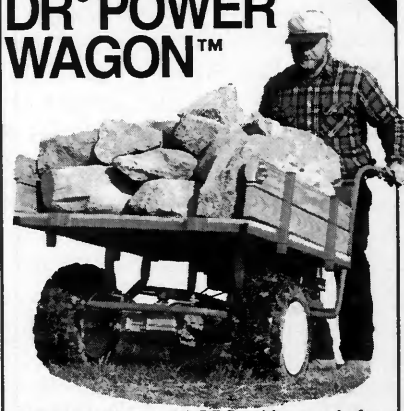
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The Farmers Home Administration had one of several exhibits at the workshop. Putting the finishing touches on the exhibit are, from left, Marvin Teckenbrock of Harrisburg, Sheldon Keyser of Nashville and Tom Beyers of Flora.

'Visioning' is one key to rural towns' survival

Develop an idea and a plan, communities told

Development professionals have known for some time that rural communities aren't going to be successful — for the most part — if they limit their efforts to lobbying big companies to locate an auto-assembly plant or steel mill in a nearby cornfield. They've also learned the hard way that massive government projects aren't good long-term bets.

The problem, to a certain extent, has been that rural economic development leaders weren't aware of many alternatives, those attending the Rural Community Development workshop were told last month in Springfield.

The workshop is part of the Rural Partners fifth annual spring conference, with participation by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs and the Governor's Rural Affairs Council.

But some trends are finally shaping up, and one of the primary ones is that there are few "top-down" solutions. In

fact, just the opposite is true. "Bottom-up," or grassroots efforts, work best.

Many speakers said one thing in varying ways: Communities that want to live, and that will fight to live, are the only ones that will survive and thrive into the future. And most of the impetus will have to come from within. The solution is not in Washington, D.C., or Springfield.

One word used variously during the program was "visioning." The idea is that the people of a community get together and develop an idea, or vision, of where they hope their town will be in a decade from now. Then they should set out a step-by-step plan, in manageable-sized segments, to get there.

Louis DiFonso, executive director of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council, noted that Illinois is urban dominated and that anyone who accepts that must also accept the fact that rural people will need to or-

ganize and work together in order to be successful.

Sara Mazie, acting associate director of the USDA's Agriculture and Rural Economy Division, Economic Research Service, told her audience that changes in the national and global economy are accelerating and that the service sector is providing more and more jobs in the rural areas.

Mazie stressed that, to achieve success, strategies to improve rural economic performance must build on an understanding of the rural economic base and the global economic trends that affect rural areas.

"Rural areas play a significant and misunderstood role in the national economy," she said, "because they're home to much of the nation's food, fiber, timber and mineral production. It's easy to understand why these activities are often thought to be the major employers of rural workers and the principal rural contribution to the nation's

gross domestic product, or GDP. That's especially understandable, given the dominant role of these activities in rural land use.

"However, as important as these activities are to the nation and the rural areas that depend on them, other economic activities actually dominate the rural economy," she said.

She noted that rural manufacturing employs more than twice as many people as all natural resource production activities combined and that, as a share of rural employment, the resource production industries declined from just over 17 percent in 1969 to slightly under 12 percent in 1987.

"On the other hand," she said, "rural manufacturing actually grew modestly in the 1980s."

Services are the biggest employer in rural America, Mazie added, and most employment growth in recent years — both rural and urban — has come in that sector. But even there, the rural areas are not doing as well as urban areas, because much of the growth is in personal services such as hotels, motels and restaurants. In urban areas, more of the service growth is in such areas as consulting and legal services, which tend to be delivered to corporate clients and which offer better pay.

Even so, she notes, some rural communities have an advantage in that there is a steadily growing demand for amenity-based services such as those catering to tourism, recreation and retirement communities.

"As we place more and more value on recreation," she said, "areas that have good scenery, a beach, river or lake, or something special in the line of tourist attractions will thrive. Those that don't will have to work harder."

Like other speakers, Mazie stressed that rural areas have to find ways to decrease their isolation if they're going to improve their economies. "If you are remote from the urban areas

— which are the engines that drive economic growth — you'll have to find ways to link up with them to your advantage. The information superhighway will help, but it won't do it all."

She added that rural areas need to create "analogs to scale," a buzzword term meaning that if you can't be big, you have to be able to figure out how



Sara Mazie

to do some things in big ways. "Rural areas, because of small size and low population densities, face difficulties in creating economies of scale and agglomeration economies. However, multi-community collaboration in service provision and buying, flexible manufacturing networks, and regulatory flexibility provide opportunities to achieve some of the advantages of scale economies," she said. Simply put, that means that communities should band together when possible and share equipment, labor and purchasing power.

Such a concept, often called "clustering," is being tried on a fairly large scale in central Illinois and was the topic of several workshop sessions.

The "Triangle of Opportunity," an area between Bloomington, Peoria and Lincoln, is bordered roughly by Interstate Highways 55, 155, and 74, and is made up of parts of Logan, Tazewell and McLean counties. The towns of Mackinaw, Minier, Hopedale,

Danvers and Atlanta are involved in the effort.

Mel Pleines of Minier notes that the communities had banded together partly to seek the economies of scale that Mazie had mentioned and in an attempt to maximize the towns' potential for growth. "We had trouble getting the organization off the ground," he said, "because it was hard to get people to make decisions. If there's one thing I learned, it's that you have to keep trying. We're trying to pool our purchasing to get better prices, and we hope to have a bicycle route set up, too. We hope to coordinate the occasional weekend 'fests' that each town has so that they don't conflict, and so on."

The group works together on industrial recruitment, housing, and small business development, too. They hope to get a low-power radio or TV station going that will serve the area. The towns share a waste-water superintendent for the region, as well as a school district.

In addition to working together, the communities each continue with their own plans. For example, Minier has improved housing for senior citizens, Hopedale has beautified the community and raised funds by selling community pride T-shirts. It has also produced a directory of local businesses. Atlanta has improved its library and placed signs at the entrances to town, and Mackinaw has planted trees, shrubs and flowers near the entrances to the town.

Stuart Rosenfeld, president of Regional Technological Strategies, Inc., a nonprofit organization in Chapel Hill, N.C., remarked that there are all kinds of terms for what's taking place in America now, and that downsizing, rightsizing, getting "lean and mean," and so on are overlooking the fact that we need to retain jobs and make better ones.

(Continued on page 18)

Web controls

(Continued from page 7)

The unit went into production in late 1981, and the following year's output amounted to better than \$1.3 million in sales, and the next year's production topped \$2 million. "It was a good product for us," Bruce says, "but we knew that it was going to be a short-term opportunity when we got into it. We do very little of that now."

'Visioning'

(Continued from page 17)

"Manufacturing still does a lot for us," he said, "and many manufacturing jobs still offer good pay. We need to keep the skills base manufacturing provides, to provide innovation. But many American businesses are working on an outmoded model, and we need to change that."

That model, he said, was based largely on heavy specialization in tooling and employee training, and little flexibility in either. The world economy is moving away from that model, he said, and some countries already have, although the U.S. has been slow to adopt the new model, which involves flexible, multi-purpose tooling and highly skilled employees.

"Now," he continued, "we need to constantly learn. We need to learn from each other, from our competitors, employees and employers. The Cooperative Extension Service was set up so people could learn from each other, and it worked well. But smaller firms are struggling, not getting much help. We need something like the Extension Service. Many small companies are not well served by today's educational facilities, and we need to work on that. We need to look harder at training people more, but training them for jobs that already exist where they live.

The next product was remarkable in a way that's particularly satisfying these days: the company beat a Japanese firm into the market. When WPC got wind of Planeta's overtures toward a Japanese firm for an ink remote system, it immediately put its R&D efforts in a new direction and wound up with the color-to-color registration system, or CCR.

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And we still need to work hard to bring in new businesses to employ the people we train."

Like several other speakers, Rosenfeld recommended more "clustering" by small firms, which means that many firms, whether they're competitors or not, can share many functions, without giving up their individual identities.

"There are about 20 states trying to foster such activities, and the people in Washington are beginning to help. They're beginning to realize that industrial modernization is economic development, and that manufacturing is important, he said."

Jan M. Grayson, director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA), stressed that Illinois is getting involved in state and local partnerships to promote economic development and that the state has money in its budget to help communities develop and enhance their attractions.

"We have a good budget to help train people for the jobs that will be generated by the passage of the North America Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, because Illinois is a clear winner there. We've calculated that we'll come out 13,000 jobs ahead as a result of it," he said.

Grayson stressed the importance of clustering, too, and cited the bicycle industry in Olney as an example. "There was one company down there,"

but it is now the company's premier product, and it is being sold all over the world. "We're still selling well in Japan," Bruce says, "and we've sold units in many European countries, too. We had a machine at a trade show in Mexico in March, and we hope to get into that market, too. And we're working on continuation products that ought to keep us on the cutting edge for years to come."

he said, "and now there are a dozen or more. They buy from and sell to each other and collaborate with each other whenever they can to their mutual benefit. We'd like to see more of that."

Centralia, a medium-sized town in Southern Illinois, is one of those that's doing quite well, and Mary Heitzig, economic director, stressed that part of the town's prosperity stems from an aggressive plan to keep the businesses that are already there and to attract new ones. "It's difficult to overemphasize the importance of keeping the businesses you already have," she said, "and it's also important to encourage them to expand locally if you know of any expansion plans the company has."

She added that she has a set of teams made up of local civic leaders who call on each business at least annually, to ask if they're pleased with the city and if there is anything the city can do to improve the town-business relationship.

"We also hold business-appreciation banquets and the like," she said, "and we do our best to let businesses know we want them to stay. We try to do the best we can for them when there's a problem, too. I think it's a real mistake to just sit there and ignore those industries. There's always someone somewhere who would like to attract them to their town. You have to keep at it."

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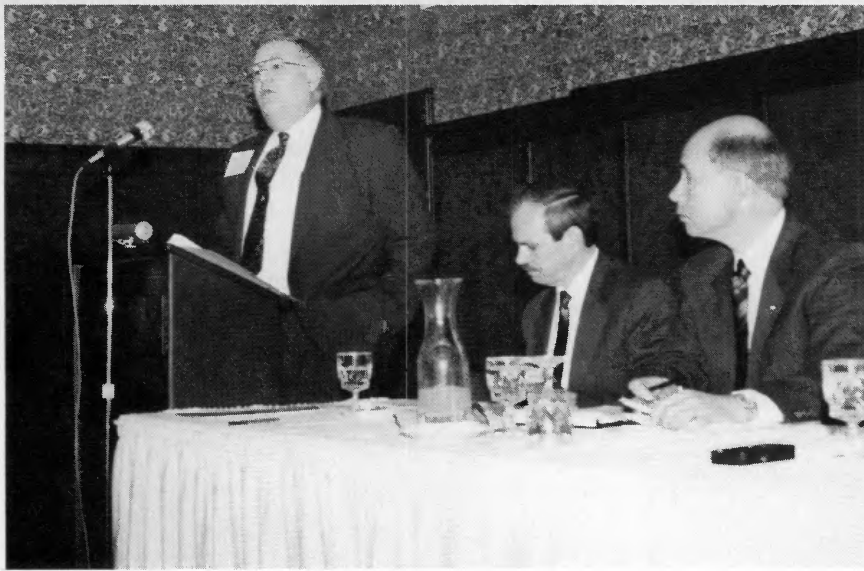
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Soyland officials foresee rate stability

A new rate structure and debt restructuring will allow a period of rate stability for the more than 156,000 electric cooperative members who receive power generated by Soyland Power Cooperative. That was the consensus of reports given to representatives of member distribution cooperatives at Soyland's 31st annual meeting March 16 at Peoria.

"The new rate will encourage us to sell more and lower our average costs," Jeffrey Reeves, Soyland board president, said. Reeves is manager of Corn Belt Electric Cooperative, Bloomington. "Debt restructuring represents a team effort of directors and staff. This agreement gives us a period of stability."

Charles B. Gill, governor and chief executive officer of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC), Washington, D.C., was guest speaker. He said, "What you have accomplished is just a beginning. From 1988 through 1999 your rates will have changed by less than

1 percent."

The foundation of Soyland's future was secured on December 15, 1993, when Soyland reached agreement with the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), CFC and other federal agencies to restructure nearly \$1 billion in Clinton Power Station debt. "The debt restructuring agreement established a fixed level for our debt service payments that Soyland can pay without increasing rates," Reeves and Kent Wick, Soyland executive vice president and general manager, said in a joint report. "Our 21 member cooperatives now have a rate structure that allows them to retain existing business and attract new business to the cooperative service areas."

Ed Gant, Soyland treasurer and manager of Illinois Rural Electric Co., Winchester, reported that, in addition to debt restructuring, reduction in expenses and increased revenues contributed to the Soyland's improved financial position. The restructured debt stabilizes

power cost by lowering interest on debt, Gant said, and opens up a new \$30 million line of credit. "The new line of credit assures us of a source of capital for needed improvements," Gant said. In addition, Gant said, sales increased during 1993 to 2,581,000 megawatt-hours and lowered the average cost of power delivered to member cooperatives by about three-tenths of a cent.

During the official business meeting, Reeves was reelected president, and Kenneth G. Heinzmann of Sandoval was reelected vice president. Other officers of the Soyland board reelected are: secretary, Robert D. Smith of Barry; assistant secretary, James E. Hinman, manager of Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Mt. Vernon; treasurer, Gant; and assistant treasurer, Michael E. Carls of Virginia.

The 21 distribution cooperatives that make up the Soyland federation are: Adams Electrical Co-Operative, Camp Point; Clay Electric Co-operative, Flora; Clinton County Electric Cooperative, Breese; Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative, Mattoon; Corn Belt Electric Cooperative, Bloomington; Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative, Paxton; Edgar Electric Co-operative Association, Paris; Farmers Mutual Electric Company, Geneseo; Illinois Rural Electric Co., Winchester; Illinois Valley Electric Cooperative, Princeton; McDonough Power Cooperative, Macomb; M.J.M. Electric Cooperative, Carlinville; Menard Electric Cooperative, Petersburg; Monroe County Electric Co-Operative, Waterloo; Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative Co., Auburn; Shelby Electric Cooperative, Shelbyville; Southwestern Electric Cooperative, Greenville; Spoon River Electric Co-operative, Canton; Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Mt. Vernon; Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative, Fairfield; and Western Illinois Electrical Coop., Carthage.

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