

MINNESOTA POWERLINE CONSTRUCTION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**ED SCHROM
NARRATOR**

**EDWARD P. NELSON
INTERVIEWER**

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ORAL HISTORY OFFICE

Cover photograph by Robert Sheldon, courtesy of Cooperative Power Association.

Funds for transcription and printing of the interviews for the Minnesota Powerline Construction Oral History Project were provided by a grant to the MHS Public Affairs Center from the Northwest Area Foundation.

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PREFACE

The Minnesota Historical Society has been collecting oral history for many years, dating to J. Fletcher Williams' interviews with territorial pioneers in the 1860s and 1870s. In 1949, Lucile M. Kane undertook a series of interviews on lumbering in the St. Croix River Valley, which became the foundation of the modern oral history collection.

The Society's oral history program was formalized in 1967 with the creation of the Oral History Office, headed by Lila Johnson Goff. Among major projects completed since that time are those concerning environmental issues, the Minnesota farm economy, the state's resort and recreation industry, Minnesota business, and interviews with representatives of a number of groups that immigrated to Minnesota during the past thirty years.

The Minnesota Powerline Construction Oral History Project represents the Society's largest single venture in the documentation of current events. The project was begun in October, 1977 and continued through December, 1979. A single researcher and interviewer was employed during the project's two-year duration. Edward P. Nelson performed all of the basic research, maintained project files, and conducted all of the interviews. He framed interview questions in consultation with James E. Fogerty, who participated in several interviews concerning electric utility operations.

Research for the Minnesota Powerline Construction Oral History Project began early in 1977, and included preliminary interviews with individuals on all sides of the issues. It also included review of local and regional newspapers and radio broadcasts for the preceding two years to provide background for the project and the interviewers. In addition, data was gathered from the Rural Electrification Administration and other federal agencies, from Minnesota state government, and from the utilities. Included were transcripts of public hearings, copies of relevant legislation, maps, and special reports. At the same time, project personnel were placed on the mailing lists of protest organization newsletters, and received notices of their meetings.

Narrators were carefully selected from long lists of those representing all major viewpoints, and the final group included farmers and townspeople from the affected areas, both opponents and proponents of the line; state officials from the Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, and the Governor's Office; officers and board members of the cooperatives building the line as well as from retail electric cooperatives; a county sheriff; and several state legislators. The interviews varied with the nature of each narrator's involvement in the controversy, but all were correlated to provide a firm base for comparison of views and motivation.



POWERLINE PROJECT PROTESTERS AND THE STATE PATROL

INTRODUCTION

With the establishment of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) in 1935, the United States government gave strong impetus to the development of electric power distribution networks for rural America. Formed to provide low cost loans to develop those networks, the REA has distributed nearly \$20 billion through direct and guaranteed loans in support of cooperative and other public power projects.

Until the mid-1960s, power channeled to customers of the electric cooperatives was largely purchased by them from investor-owned utilities and from federal power projects. The expanding threat of an energy shortage led the retail power cooperatives to pool their resources by forming generation and transmission cooperatives to provide them wholesale power. Projected power shortages and the lack of firm guarantees for purchased power in turn led the generation and transmission cooperatives to construct their own power generating facilities.

Most of Minnesota's retail electric cooperatives are served by one of two generation and transmission organizations: United Power Association (UPA) and Cooperative Power Association (CPA). Both UPA and CPA have since merged into Great River Energy.

United Power, with headquarters thirty-five miles northwest of Minneapolis in Elk River, is the older of the two organizations. It was formed in 1963 by the Rural Cooperative Power Association and the Northern Minnesota Power Association to construct and operate a 166 megawatt coal-fired generating plant near Stanton, North Dakota. In 1972, UPA became the survivor of a merger with its two parent cooperatives. UPA wholesales power to fifteen retail cooperatives serving 175,000 customers in twenty-three Minnesota counties.

Cooperative Power Association, headquartered in the Minneapolis suburb of Edina, was created in 1956 to supply wholesale power to the 135,000 customers of nineteen retail cooperatives in southern and western Minnesota. CPA did not operate any generating facilities prior to 1979.

In 1972, UPA and CPA undertook a feasibility study covering construction of a major generating facility. In 1973, the two cooperatives announced plans to construct a coal-fired generating station near Underwood, North Dakota. The plant was designed to include two 550 megawatt generators, both of which are now in service. The location of the plant in an area well outside the cooperatives' service area was dictated by its proximity to North Dakota's lignite fields, in particular to the North American Coal Corporation's Falkirk Mine. Lignite is a low-grade coal, and cannot be transported economically to distant generating stations as, for instance, can

western low-sulfur coal from Wyoming's Powder River Basin. One simply needs more lignite per kilowatt hour, and the costs of transport generally outpace the benefits of the fuel's initially lower cost.

The Underwood facility is a mine-mouth plant, called the Coal Creek Station, and was designed, together with a 400 kilovolt direct-current transmission line, to produce power for market in Minnesota. The line stretches 425 miles from the plant to a converting station at Dickinson, a town 17 miles west of Minneapolis; 170 of those miles cross nine western and central Minnesota counties and include a total of 659 towers placed at intervals of one-quarter mile on the property of 476 landowners. Western Minnesota is rich agricultural country, heavily planted with corn, wheat, soybeans, and sugar beets, and the powerline route passes through the heart of this land.

Easements for construction of the line were obtained without problem in North Dakota, and in Minnesota's Traverse County. Arrival of the cooperatives' easement agents in Grant and Pope counties, however, provoked a storm of protest over the powerline route, and for the first time its construction became widely controversial. Failing to secure easements from landowners and some county boards, the cooperatives asked the State of Minnesota to route the line. The decision to allow this change brought the state and its officials into the controversy.

Initial development of the line had been preceded by two years of hearings—on corridor selection, routing within the corridor, and finally before county commissions in the areas affected. In all, thirty-three meetings were held in North Dakota and forty-eight in Minnesota. By 1977, when the Minnesota Historical Society organized the Minnesota Powerline Construction Oral History Project, it was obvious that local resentment against the line had become a major issue within the state, although its future national importance was not yet apparent. Resentment was triggered by the line's placement, which the protesters felt had not been adequately reviewed by those whose land was directly affected; and by concern over rapid escalation of the power plant's cost, from an initial estimate of \$537 million to a later figure of nearly \$1.2 billion. Costs were driven up in part by higher than expected inflation rates, by increasingly stringent federal and state environmental and siting laws, and ultimately by costs attributable to the protest itself.

Additional frustration was created by cumbersome review processes, and by what many protesters saw as excessive concern by the federal and Minnesota state governments for wildlife areas and highway right of way at the expense of protection for productive farmland. In addition to local and state governments, the controversy involved political parties, churches, civic organizations, and businesses in communities throughout west central Minnesota. Several candidates used the powerline issue as a major platform in their campaigns for state office. Attorneys for both sides engaged in a series of protracted legal battles, the legislature was asked for changes in powerline siting laws, and the Governor met pressure and opposition from all

sides. The state patrol confronted protesters in the fields, and the destruction of utility equipment and powerline towers became an expensive crisis and an issue in itself.

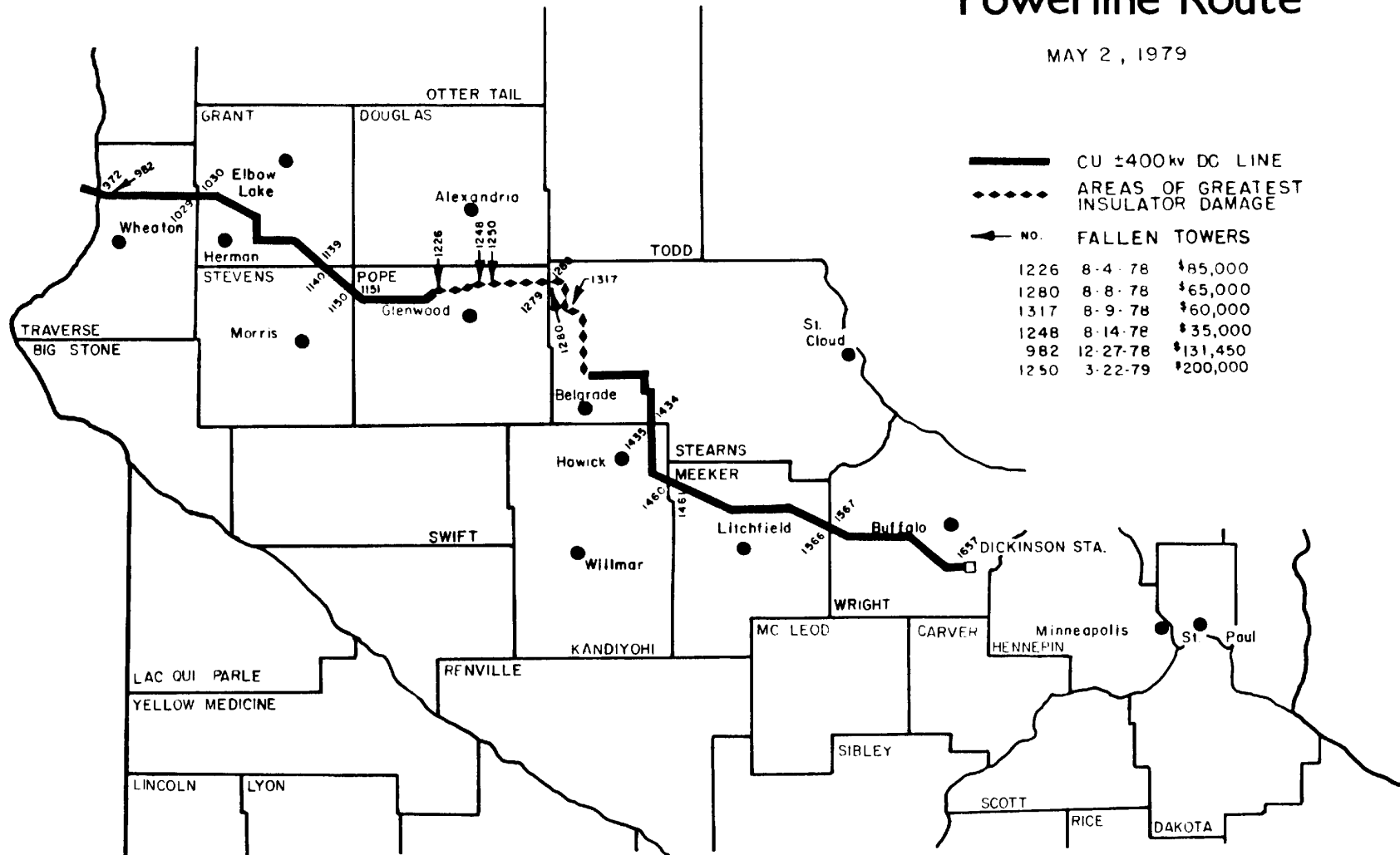
The Powerline Construction Oral History Project succeeded in large part because those operating it were outsiders, without a stake in the outcome and without evident bias. Maintaining objectivity is not simple, especially when one is documenting a highly emotional issue, but as emotions rise objectivity is all the more necessary to the maintenance of interview discipline. The careful structure and execution of the powerline project has paid dividends; in 1981 it is already evident that the information available on tape would not have been preserved through any other means, and that it was gathered none too soon. Today would have been too late to capture quite what exists on tape.

James E. Fogerty
Minnesota Historical Society
March 12, 1981

Updated November 2002

Powerline Route

MAY 2, 1979



FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

CPA	Cooperative Power Association
CU Project	Short term for the powerline construction project. (“C” from CPA/”U” from UPA)
DFL	Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party—the Minnesota branch of the national Democratic Party
kV	kilovolt
MEQB	Minnesota Environmental Quality Board
MPIRG	Minnesota Public Interest Research Group
MW	megawatt
PCA	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
REA	Rural Electrification Administration
UPA	United Power Association

Powerline Protest Organizations

CO-REG	Coalition of Rural Environmental Groups
CURE	Counties United for a Rural Environment
FACT	Families Are Concerned Too
GASP	General Assembly to Stop the Powerline
KTO	Keep Towers Out
NP	No Powerlines
SOC	Save Our Countryside
SURE	States United for a Rural Environment

CHRONOLOGY OF COAL CREEK PROJECT*

1972

- Mid-year CPA and UPA began discussing the possibility of the two cooperatives jointly constructing a major generating complex.
- October REA completes CPA and UPA Power Requirements Study.
- November 2 CPA and UPA authorize the firm of Burns and McDonnell to prepare feasibility studies and analyses for a joint power supply project to fulfill requirements through 1982.

1973

- May 19 Minnesota Environmental Quality Council created.
- May 23 Minnesota Power Plant Siting Act enacted.
- July 15 Feasibility study completed by Burns and McDonnell.
- July 27 CPA and UPA sign "Memorandum of Understanding."
- July 31 Environmental analysis of plant prepared by Burns and McDonnell.
- September 14 Environmental Report on Transmission System prepared by Commonwealth Associates.
- October 2 Draft Federal environmental impact statement issued by the REA and sent to all cognizant Federal and State agencies. No public hearings were held by the Administrator.
- October Coal Creek project exempted from Minnesota Power Plant Siting Act.
- November 29 CPA and UPA applied to REA for \$82,887,000 in insured loan funds and to guarantee loan funds in the amount of \$453,792,000.
- December Black and Veatch employed as A&E contractor.

1974

- February 6 REA granted initial loan approval and guarantee in the amount of \$537 million.
- April 28 Minnesota Energy Agency created.
- April 1974 to March 1975
A total of 48 public meetings held in eight Minnesota counties.
- August 2 Rules under the Minnesota Power Plant Siting Act adopted.
- August 6 Final Federal environmental impact statement issued by the REA.
- September 11 CPA/UPA applied to the North Dakota State Department of Health for a construction permit.

* Taken from "Coal Creek: A Power Project with Continuing Controversies Over Costs, Siting, and Potential Health Hazards," Report by the Comptroller General of the United States, November 26, 1979.

October 3	Board of Directors of CPA resolved to apply to REA for \$96,000,000 in insured or guaranteed loan funds to meet capital costs of developing Falkirk coal mine.
October 14	CAP/UPA signed "Coal Sales Agreement with Falkirk Mining Company," dated July 1, 1974.
October	Planned generating plant construction start delayed to May 5, 1975.
November	REA approved an additional loan guarantee for \$96,000,000 for CPA/UPA to finance the development of a coal mining operation.

1975

March 28	CPA/UPA applied to the State of Minnesota for corridor designation under the Power Plant Siting Act. This action was taken because some countries would not issue necessary permits.
April 9	The North Dakota Energy Conversion and Transmission Facility Siting Laws were enacted.
April 11	Construction permit issued by the North Dakota Department of Health.
May 5	Black and Veatch start generating plant construction.
September 30	Rules are adopted by the Minnesota Energy Agency concerning certificate of need. Note: These rules were not promulgated until six months after CPA/UPA applied for corridor designation.
October 3	Minnesota issued CPA/UPA a permit of corridor compatibility.
October 6	CPA/UPA applied to the Minnesota Energy Agency for a certificate of need.
November 11	Contract issued for clearing North Dakota right of way.
November 12	Appeal on corridor designation was filed in Pope County District Court.
November 24	CPA/UPA filed an application for route designation and construction permit.
December 2	Appeal on corridor designation was filed in Grant County.
December 12	Contract issued for high voltage transmission line construction.
December 23	North Dakota siting regulations under the Energy Conversion and Transmission Facility Siting Act adopted.

1976

February	Jurisdictional hearing in North Dakota on right of way.
February 25	Draft environmental impact statement issued by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
March 6	North Dakota Public Service Commission assumes control over Coal Creek transmission system.
March 10	Grant County District Court dismisses appeal on corridor designation.

Spring	Planned construction start for transmission line in Minnesota.
April	Planned transmission line construction in North Dakota delayed until April 1977
April 2	Certificate of Need issued by Director Minnesota Energy Agency. Note: Need was determined about six months after the corridor had been approved.
May 5	Final State environmental impact statement issued by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
May 5	CPA/UPA apply for North Dakota DC route designation and construction permit.
June 3	Route designation and construction permit issued by Minnesota Environmental Quality Council.
July - August	Appeals on line construction permit filed in Stearns, Grant and Traverse county district courts.
August 11	District Court order prohibited CPA/UPA from doing any work or contacting landowners in Stearns County.
September	REA approved \$325,352,000 in additional loan guarantees for a new total of \$958,031,000.
October 4	Appeal on line construction permit filed in Meeker County District Court.
October 21	Temporary Injunction Order issued against plaintiffs.
October 27	Action filed in U.S. District Court against the State of Minnesota.
November 8	U.S. District Court action dismissed.
December 17	Route designation and construction permit issued by the North Dakota PSC.
December 22	CPA/UPA apply to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a water intake permit.
1977	
January	MHS Powerline Construction Oral History Project begins.
January 12	A joint Minnesota House-Senate legislative hearing was held in St. Cloud to gather testimony on the powerline dispute.
February 3	Minnesota legislative group persuades Governor Perpich to call in an outside mediator to help the opposing sides resolve the dispute.
March 1	Minnesota Supreme Court consolidated seven powerline court cases into one to be heard by a panel of three district court judges.
March 16	American Arbitration Association Vice President held his first mediation session with a delegation of powerline opponents and power cooperative officials. The session ended in an impasse.
March 22	The three-judge District Court panel met to hear consolidated powerline cases. The panel ordered a halt to all surveying and construction activities on the CPA/UPA project in Minnesota.
April	Transmission line construction started in North Dakota.

April 22	CPA/UPA applied to North Dakota PSC for an AC line route permit from Stanton to Coal Creek. The application process for this permit began on August 6, 1976.
May 2	CPA/UPA applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for a permit to cross a Federal wildlife refuge.
July 14	The three-judge District Court panel unanimously ruled in favor of the power cooperatives in the consolidated powerline appeals.
August	Bid solicitation for constructing transmission line in Minnesota.
September 8	North Dakota PSC issued a route permit for the Stanton to Coal Creek AC line. This process took 13 months to complete.
September 13	Construction contract for Minnesota transmission line awarded.
September 30	Minnesota Supreme Court ruled unanimously in favor of the power cooperatives in the consolidated powerline appeals.
October 25	Restraining order issued which bars interference with powerline construction in six Minnesota counties.
November 1	Transmission line construction started in Minnesota.
November 8	Minnesota Department of Health released its study of public health and safety effects of high voltage lines.
November 13	Powerline opponents filed a \$5 million damage suit in U.S. District Court against the power cooperatives, various state agencies in Minnesota and North Dakota, and various officials.
December 6	North Dakota and Minnesota powerline opponents filed suit in U.S. District Court seeking a temporary restraining order halting further construction contending that the project failed to follow Federal environmental regulations.
December 15	Powerline opponents in Minnesota agreed to demand that the Governor set up a science court.
December 20	Powerline opponents decided not to support a science court unless a construction moratorium is included.

1978

January	About 50 powerline opponents were arrested or cited for obstructing a legal process, damage to property, etc.
January 5	Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich authorized sending up to 175 state troopers to Pope County.
January 9	U.S. District Judge denied powerline opponents' request for a temporary restraining order halting construction. All defendants except the utilities and the sheriffs were dismissed from the powerline opponents' damage suit.
January 13	U.S. District Judge denied the powerline opponents' request for a temporary injunction against the sheriff and utilities.

March 9	CPA/UPA flew more than 90 people to visit a similar power line in Oregon. Although invited, scant interest was shown by protesters or Minnesota legislators. As of this date, over 70 people in Minnesota had been arrested as a result of protest.
March 9	State troopers were withdrawn from powerline guard duties.
April 17	Section 10 permit for the water intake facilities issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Sixteen months expired between application and issuance.
June 9	Permit to cross wildlife refuges issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. Thirteen months expired between application and issuance.
June 12	CPA/UPA engage private security force to guard line and equipment. At times this force numbered about 300 people.
August 25	Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich requested FBI assistance in investigating the attacks on powerline towers.
October	REA approved \$214,053,000 in additional loan guarantees, which when added to \$73,947,000 from pollution bond financing, made \$288 million in additional financing available for a new total of \$1,246,031,000.
October 17	Transmission line energized for first test.
December	Between August 1978 and January 1979, five transmission towers were toppled and over 900 insulators damaged.

1979

January 10	Minnesota Governor Al Quie stated that the eminent domain law needs to be modified.
January 14	CPA/UPA released private security force.
March 1	A total of 3,155 insulators on the transmission line have been damaged.
April 19	The Minnesota House passed a resolution on a 110-11 vote condemning the destruction of equipment on the high-voltage line and urging the Governor, the State Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and other law enforcement agencies to bring the violence and vandalism to a halt.
May 9	Generating unit Number One first tested.
June 25	Over 20 people testify as to health irritants attributed to the powerline at a meeting in Sauk Centre, Minnesota.
June 28	Commercial operation of the Coal Creek plant delayed by a month due to faulty operation of coal pulverizers. As of this date, about 5,500 insulators have been damaged, mostly by gun fire.
August 1	Coal Creek unit Number One put into commercial service.
August	Three powerline towers toppled by vandals.
December	MHS Powerline Construction Oral History Project Completed.

1980

October Powerline ownership transferred to REA.

Five powerline towers toppled by vandals during the year.

LIST OF NARRATORS*

Anderson, Charles L. President, board of directors of Cooperative Power Association. Farmer from Litchfield, Meeker County. Recorded February 14, 1979.

Anderson, Willard. Manager, Agralite Cooperative, Benson, Swift County. Recorded January 3, 1978.

Banks, Robert S. Minnesota Department of Health. Author of health study report on powerline construction. Recorded March 13, 1978

Barsness, Nancy C. Farmer from Cyrus, Pope County. Freelance reporter on powerline issues for KMRS Radio and several newspapers in Pope County. Recorded February 20 and June 5, 1979.

Berg, Charles. State Senator and farmer from Chokio, Stevens County. Recorded June 13, 1977.

Bradley, Wendell. Professor of physics and environmental science, Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Sibley County. Member of CO-REG. Recorded March 19, 1978.

Brooks, Ronnie. Aide to Governor Rudy Perpich. Governor's representative to the MEQB. Recorded August 8, 1979

Crocker, George. Powerline opponent and long-time anti-war activist. Resident of Lowry, Pope County, during the powerline protest. Recorded February 21, 1979.

Emmons, Ira Dale. Pope County sheriff, Glenwood. Recorded April 29, 1977.

Fjoslien, David. State Representative and farmer from Douglas County. Recorded February 1, 1978.

Fuchs, Virgil and Jane H. Farmers and protest leaders from Belgrade, Stearns County. Recorded December 6, 1977.

Gelbman, James. MPIRG Coordinator from University of Minnesota-Morris. Recorded December 8, 1978.

Hagen, Harold. Farmer from Pope County and president of CURE. Recorded June 1, 1977.

Hanson, Richard A. Farmer and university student from Pope County. Manager of Alice Tripp's gubernatorial campaign in 1978. Recorded February 14, 1979.

* Listed occupation and place of residence for each narrator is current as of December 31, 1979.

Hartman, Lawrence B. Project Manager for MEQB. Managed siting process for the CU Project. Recorded February 27, 1978, and April 6, 1979.

Hayenga, Wallace. Staff Assistant at Blue Earth-Nicollet-Faribault Cooperative Electric Association, Mankato, Blue Earth County. Recorded March 14, 1978.

Hedner, Gordon and Helen B. Farmers from Pope County; members of FACT. Recorded April 5, 1977.

Hirsch, Merle N. Professor of Physics and Chairman of the Science and Mathematics Division, University of Minnesota-Morris. Recorded February 20, 1979.

Jacobson, Donald G. Public Relations Manager, United Power Association. Recorded August 24 and August 30, 1978.

Jenks, Scott and Lorraine. Farmers in Pope County. Members of FACT. Recorded April 20, 1977.

Jost, Paul J. Vice-President, board of directors of Cooperative Power Association. Member, board of directors of Agralite Cooperative. Farmer near Morris, Stevens County. Recorded February 14, 1979.

Koudela, Carolyn. Farmer from Alexandria, Douglas County. President, SOC. Recorded February 21, 1979

Lennick, Ted V. General Manager, Cooperative Power Association. Recorded September 12 and September 19, 1978.

Martin, Philip O. General Manager, United Power Association. Recorded July 27 and August 2, 1978.

Millhone, John. Director, Minnesota Energy Agency; member of MEQB. Recorded April 10, 1978.

Nelson, C. David. Pope County attorney. Recorded April 22, 1977.

Nelson, James. Farmer and protest leader from Grant County. Member SOC and NP. Recorded May 31, 1977.

Olhoft, Wayne. State Senator from Herman, Grant County. Recorded December 29, 1977.

Olson, Donald. Powerline opponent, protest organizer, and long-time anti-war and anti-nuclear activist from Minneapolis. Recorded April 18, 1978.

Pick, Deborah. Powerline opponent and anti-nuclear activist. Resident of Lowry, Pope County, during the powerline protest. Recorded February 13, 1979.

Richardson, Hervey. Retired farmer and member of Agralite Cooperative board of directors. Recorded December 7, 1977.

Rutledge, Dennis and Nina H. Farmers from Lowry, Pope County. Members of FACT and SOC. Recorded December 6, 1978.

Schrom, Ed. State Senator and farmer from Albany, Stearns County. Recorded February 1, 1978.

Schumacher, Wayne. Former State Representative and farmer from Glenwood, Pope County. Recorded May 31, 1977.

Sheldon, Robert. Public Relations Manager, Cooperative Power Association. Recorded August 7, 1979.

Sieling, Louis. Farmer from Perham, Otter Tail County, and director of Lake Region Cooperative Electrical Association. Recorded May 18, 1977.

Stone, John R. Editor, *Pope County Tribune*. Recorded February 21, 1979.

Strand, Roger E. State Senator and farmer from Pope County. Recorded February 2, 1978.

Tollefson, Paul. Farmer and powerline supporter from Northfield, Rice County. Recorded March 20, 1978.

Torborg, Rev. Elmer. Catholic priest and director of Rural Life Office, Sauk Centre, Stearns County. Recorded January 4, 1978.

Tripp, Alice. Protest leader, candidate for Governor in 1978, and farmer from Belgrade, Stearns County. Member KTO, CURE, SURE. Recorded December 6, 1977.

Vanderpoel, Peter. Director, State Planning Agency and MEQB. Recorded March 17, 1978.

Wald, Kenneth. Environmental use planner for the State Department of Natural Resources. Recorded March 24, 1978.

Woida, Math and Gloria B. Farmers and powerline opponents from Sauk Centre, Stearns County. Recorded February 13, 1979.

THE INTERVIEW

Ed Schrom
Narrator

Edward P. Nelson
Interviewer

February 1, 1978

Albany, Minnesota

EN: Today is February 1, 1978. I'm at the office of Senator Ed Schrom, a Democrat, District 16, Albany, Minnesota. My name is Ed Nelson.

Senator Schrom, where's your hometown and what was your occupation prior to being elected?

ES: Well, I was born and raised in Albany, and that's still my hometown. I farmed there all my life. I still own the farm. I operated the farm from 1936 until I got elected in 1970. So actually the period was about thirty-four years.

EN: So you've been in the legislature for eight years now?

ES: That's right. That's correct.

EN: What committees have you served on?

ES: Well, since I've been in the legislature?

EN: Yes.

ES: I have served on Agriculture, Natural Resources, Labor and Commerce, General Legislation and Veteran's Affairs, Local Government, and Taxes, and Tax Laws.

EN: Have any of these committees worked directly with powerline legislation?

ES: Yes, the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee has worked on nearly all the legislation—outside of the judiciary, I suppose in some areas, but the— All the bills regarding powerline siting, impact statements, energy need—everything like this, most of them came through the Natural Resources Committee.

EN: Were you involved in the 1973 powerline legislation?

ES: Yes. You're now asking the question whether I was involved in voting for or against the bill or was aware of the legislation we passed?

EN: Yes, I guess what sorts of things were involved.

ES: Well, I think at that time there was a need for more study to be conducted before powerline siting. And I think—didn't we have the Power Plant Siting in that same bill, the [unclear] studies about powerline siting, and the type of agencies that would be laying out corridors. I think this was basically what the line siting legislation in 1973 did. More of a study was to be conducted. Before that I don't think we had anything.

EN: Do you remember why this came up at this time?

ES: Well, I think that people were concerned because there wasn't any study, and I think as far as the environmentalists are concerned, the pollution control agency, the general public—I think the siting legislation of 1973 was the result of the demands from those people.

EN: So it was sort of a change in the times...

ES: It was, yes. Before that there, I don't think there was any study that was necessary for the power company to follow to site a line. If they figured they needed a line, they just put it wherever they thought was best and without any study. This law required now study in corridors and routing, so the people could view hearings and whatnot.

EN: Do you think that, in lieu of the controversy, that this legislation met the needs that it was enacted for?

ES: I think it did, yes. I think it did what people wanted it to do. The controversy now rising over this powerline out here—I'm referring—when I say powerline now it's the one where all the controversy is on—I think the courts have ruled that everything was complied with and it was good, and, of course, there was no rule broken in following the procedure laid out by the Powerline Siting Act in 1973. I think the rules were followed.

EN: Can you pinpoint what went wrong? I mean if the controversy came out of this, and if the laws were okay, what happened?

ES: Well, this is a long story what happened. What went wrong? Pinpointing one particular thing?

EN: I guess I'm referring to the process. It supposedly would go through a process set forth by the 1973 legislation.

ES: Well, the process I think was working until— Well, there were three corridors selected. This is when we could pinpoint what went wrong. When you ask that question, I can only answer with what I believe was the biggest factor: Why do we have all these people out here protesting, and especially from Stearns County, why Stearns County? That's where it started. That's where it

still is. That's where the most vehement opponents live today. I don't think it hurt them any more than anyone else along this line. But why?

When there were three corridors selected in Stearns County—and finally where a citizens' committee selected a route within the one designated corridor, which was selected then, through and with the study, and all this kind of thing, and the route was in that corridor—the south corridor, which included Bonanza Valley. The line, the route, then within the twenty-mile corridor, was supposed to go and run through Bonanza Valley, coming in from the west, and then coming back on the regular route where it now is.

Then there was a series of protests filed before it was—on hearings at that stage, whether the route would be accepted. What happened at those hearings was that the line, the route, was moved out of Bonanza Valley and put north of Bonanza Valley over the higher and better agricultural ground, where it is today. When these people found out that that was done to them, they just thought, and I still say it, 'if they can do that to us, we don't have to take the line either.' That's where it started, and that's where it is today.

The people who were influential in moving that line were very influential people, like—I can name possibly—the head of the list is Commissioner of Agriculture, Jon Wefald, who wrote a letter, documented testimony, that he would like to see the line moved out of Bonanza Valley due to the problem that could arise from irrigation, and put it north where they didn't have as much or any irrigation. That's where the whole thing started.

EN: What are the laws with respect to the right of eminent domain, concerning power of utilities? Do you have sort of maybe a general explanation of what they would be and what they mean?

ES: Well, I don't know if I, as an ordinary farmer or a legislator, can even define eminent domain, what they would mean, but I think the right of eminent domain, I would say, has to be granted to utilities, also to units of government and roads, highway departments. As far as eminent domain in itself, I think it is absolutely necessary that we have it so that society can be served and served meaningfully.

Eminent domain dates back a long time. In fact, it may go back to the Roman Empire. It has come to—and has survived and has done and served the country well—the railroads, utilities, transportation and roads. Units of government, like cities, counties and the state have the right to use eminent domain.

EN: Well, one of the things coming out of the controversy is whether eminent domain should be used when there's a minority opposing a project such as this. What if there's a majority of the people opposing it? Do you think the same validity still holds true?

ES: If the majority of people would oppose eminent domain?

EN: Yes, oppose the condemnation of the—oppose, say, the right-of-way of the powerline.

ES: Well, you're talking the majority of people that are involved in the powerline?

EN: Right.

ES: Are you asking if it shouldn't be used if they oppose it?

EN: Yes.

ES: No way. No. Can't be. These are not the majority. These are majority of people affected, but these are not the majority of people served by the final result of the line. You've got to put a million against a couple hundred farmers from North Dakota. If you just confine it to the people involved, as far as eminent domain is concerned, you would have a million against, I don't know how many landowners, possibly 200-300, maybe 400, under 500. Now I don't think the 500, even if they all object—

We can't have that. It's just one of those things. How would you get to Minneapolis to Fargo, if you didn't have the right to condemn a roadway, a right-of-way? If those people on the way to Fargo could stop you, well, you would never get a road in. That's just my interpretation of it.

EN: Yes, have there been any problems when it's been granted to utilities? Do you think sometimes that utilities have abused this power of eminent domain?

ES: Well, I have not conducted a study, and I don't see—It hasn't come out where real abuses have been. I think if there had been real abuses, it would have surfaced in this controversy because I'm sure the legal counsel would have dug it out some place. There are still people that believe... You know this is—the powerline out here is blown way out of proportion. It is not at all confined to the people. It's not a true picture of what it is. It is blown way out of proportion by the press, by the publicity it has received, and by the so-called actors at the scene.

EN: What sorts of things do you think are blown out of proportion?

ES: I think it's not being put in its proper perspective. They talk of UPA and CPA as some foreign, big power company. The UPA-CPA is nothing but a small group of co-ops, thirty-four in all, who are serving the very people that is fighting them. A co-op is not something that pays big dividends. They operate at a par level. In fact they control themselves. There are no profits. Profits are put back, plowed back into—because you pay your way. That's all. No dividends. Nothing like, you know, you're entitled to be paid dividends from NSP [Northern States Power] or Minnesota Power & Light, which are private corporations where people put in their money. This is not like it's put out in the paper at all. It's really like it's farmer against farmer. It's not farmer against the big power company. That's what's blown out of proportion.

People down here in the metropolitan area, they sympathize with the farmer because they look at it as the farmer against the big power company. Isn't that your impression of it? What I mean is that it's not at all that. It's farmer against farmer. These co-ops, these very same people out there

are represented on that co-op, that is doing that to them, by a director that they vote for, and who represents them as well as being a member of that corporation. Because the directors come from the areas, and the people have a right to vote and they're in. So what I mean is it's farmer against farmer or co-op against farmer. It's not farmer against big, giant corporation—some foreign agent, but that's the way they act.

EN: Has it been a problem for yourself as a legislator, and I assume many of your constituents are opposed to the line, has it been a real problem, a real political issue for you?

ES: Well, it certainly has been a problem. It's been a problem for me in trying to be fair to the people. I think that my only obligation is to be fair. I represent all the people in my district, which are possibly 60-65-70,000. Maybe 50,000 are going to be served by this line, and maybe 150 have make the sacrifice of having the towers on their particular land.

This is what it boils down to. That doesn't mean that I don't try to protect the minority. I think they should be adequately compensated and given every opportunity to get answers to all the questions they have, and, like I said, I would not stab them in the back. No way. I have to protect those people, too, because minorities need protection, but majorities in all instances should prevail. I mean when they pass something that is not unreasonable, and they have a right to this power, because the need is established—it's there, it exists, it's on record through all the different agencies, and I think these people have a right to expect that this line should be built.

The question again comes up: Why here? These people say, "Why here?" Well, I'm not going to stand in your yard and say, "I'm gonna move it up here to the neighbor," because why there? Because all the agencies we have, all the studies we have up to the present time under the system said that it is going to be here. So that's why it is here.

When you ask the people, "Where should it go?" and in plain words they say, "I don't care where you put it, but not here." Well, I care where I put it because I can't take it from you and put it over there because he's still my—if he isn't my constituent, then he's still in the state of Minnesota. He is also an individual. He is also a farmer. His land may not be as valuable—yes, it might not be—but it's just as important to him as it is to you. So that's not correcting a situation.

If we could say that we don't need the line, that's a different thing. But when we say we need the line, we admit that, and say but not here, then we get into a problem because I can't stand there and say that I'll move the line. No way.

EN: Some critics have charged that there are possible health hazards, that that issue hasn't been explored, and such things as the tower placement. They could have followed the section lines. Do you think that we could have the line and still satisfy those complaints from people?

ES: Well, the first question you have in regard to the health hazards, right? They've held onto that. I don't believe they believe that anymore, because it seems to me like they don't want to accept the science court, which would make available to them the studies that have been conducted and are being conducted on two presently existing lines in this country, one in Canada right over the border, one in California, both 400 kV lines, very similar to this one. No ill effects whatsoever or very little.

The thing is when you're asking something that we have no answers for, you know, it could very likely be that if you have, say, a dozen scientists, the greatest physicists or whatever you want to call them—I think that's their name—that would study the powerline effects, now they all may have the same qualifications, have gone to the same school, had the same teacher, but they get into this gray area where who should they turn to for an answer? Then there is one that said, "Well, I don't believe that." But the rest of them, they say, "Well, I believe that." But the one—we've had this. We've had it in nuclear research. We've had it in nuclear, where there's one against 250. The one may be proven right, only after possibly—I don't know how many years—or after a certain malfunction. But he has a perfect right to disagree because nobody can say that he isn't right or that he is wrong. I don't know.

If I'd ask you offhand how high is high, I don't think you could answer that, because there is no answer, or if I can put it in simple terms: How far can you see? And offhand without thinking you'd say, "I can see a long ways." And I'd say, "Well, how far is that?" And you'd maybe say, "Twenty miles." Well, I'd say, "Well, that's plain ridiculous. You could see further than that." And then you'd maybe turn around and say, "How far can you see?" Well, I'd say, "I can see the moon, and I can see the stars, and I can see the sun." And then you'd say, "Well, I can see that, too." But then I ask you, "Well, about how far is that?" Now some of these things are measured, whether by light years or other ways, but actually I don't think anybody has any idea of how far you can see or what I see. When we get into this area of a science court and the effects of—today how it would affect the ozone, I don't know. See, but they held themselves to this. I honestly believe that—I don't know if you saw the report in the [*Minneapolis*] *Star* the other night? Where the *Star* sent a man out to California. Did you see it?

EN: No, I didn't.

ES: Okay. These people are living under that line for eight years. They're raising their crops. They're raising their livestock. They're raising their kids. They've got their gardens. Their kids play under the towers. The one man, they wanted to move him because—and he said, "No, I'll stay right here. You want to build a line, you build it right over me." So they built it right over his house. That's in that story in the *Minneapolis Star*.

There are absolutely no ill effects. These people were asked what they think of the people here in Minnesota, and they say they can't understand these people. Because they said, "There are no ill effects of this line."—for the same sort of 400 kV plus or minus line that's proposed here.

EN: How about the issue of tower placement? Do you think if they had gone with the section line idea that they would have avoided some of the problems they've had?

ES: Well, you're saying if it was all on section lines?

EN: I don't know if that's reasonable.

ES: Well, I think we have passed legislation that would ask them to go on quarter section and straight east and west or north and south lines, wherever possible, and they're doing that.

Now, of course, if you make a deal with the company and you give them an easement to go kitty-corner across your land for a certain amount of compensation, then maybe, just maybe your land is so situated that you have a ravine or a draw running in that same direction as the line is going, and you'd sooner have it follow that draw, then down here where you maybe have an 80, and it would cut through the middle of that 80—but then again, your posts are only a quarter mile apart. I don't think they—and if they're too much—I know that I farm, and I've got a quarter, and a half and a quarter—one mile, one mile and a quarter of highline posts on my farm, and I've got anchors and everything else, and I think all those posts, which are 250 feet apart are more of an inconvenience than a tower every quarter mile, 40 by 40 feet at the base.

EN: There's been a lot of criticism of state agencies and administrators and appointed officials charging that the studies were inadequate and the hearings were inaccurate in terms of the records and things like this. Have you seen or do you have any reflections on appointed officials who can have such a great impact on people?

ES: No, I don't think so. I don't think that the criticism of the state agency involved with the administration have— The critics of the line that charge that the studies done were inadequate—and to criticize the people—I think the state officials—I can't say whether it was arrogant or not, but at least all these complaints have been tested in the courts. Now if the court didn't find anything, I can only say, you know—I can go on believing—just like these people have a right to. I'm not going to say that they, of course, think that the court is wrong.

Now what can I accept but a decision of the court? Where can I go to? I can go to the Supreme Court, but then they also decided that. The Supreme Court has decided this. We can go one step further to the United States Supreme Court, and I think they have some things pending there. Where do we go from there? If agencies have been wrong, if individuals have been arrogant—I don't know if there's any law that says that you have to smile when you do some things, or can you be snickering or—I mean arrogant can be, you know— These charges have been made. I think the court has considered all of them—admissions of tape or not enough hearing. I think their counsel, which I'm sure they must believe in, must have presented all these factors to the judges in the court case—all their complaints.

EN: Were you involved at all with the public hearings?

ES: Yes, I did attend the public hearings.

EN: Did you testify or...?

ES: No, I didn't testify. I was not asked to testify.

EN: Do you have any reflections on the events that were going on there, your personal view?

ES: Well, I think that in some cases there were some minor infractions of—well, let's say they just left the door open. You've heard of this tape omission that has been done. They left out some of the hearing proceedings on the transcripts. They didn't have the complete tape. Now the court ruled on that particular item alone. They listened to the whole tape, and then they read the transcript, and the court decided that what was left out, or what was missing, would not have had a bearing on the judgment rendered by the court or by the agency. It wasn't vital.

Now, of course, it made a case for the farmers. Again you have to see what I saw, and I think it should not have happened. I don't think any of the tape should have been omitted. If it wasn't audible, it should have been put in there as not, you know, in the transcript. I think that was a mistake, but the court has decided that issue. So who am I to say? I have to accept the decision of the court.

I don't hide behind that, but I say all of us, if we have disagreements, we can go to court. Right? We don't settle in on the street. Like I say, we go to court. Get yourself a lawyer or be your own lawyer and take it to court and let the judge and jury decide it. That's the system, and we have to abide by it—at least I do.

EN: Last spring there was some legislation enacted concerning powerlines and power plant options. Were you involved in such things as the whole farm option and changing the easement payments practice and property tax cuts and things like that?

ES: Yes, I was involved in all of them. I'm on that bill that involved all that. I personally introduced bills that the line would go on section lines. I was chief author of the bill. I introduced legislation that eliminated and took the priority away from wildlife, so that wildlife wouldn't be on the same priority as agricultural land. I was on—

[Tape interruption]

—through condemnation, and all these things I was involved.

EN: Now you said you were involved with the whole farm bill. There's been some criticism that this may change the structure of the community, that it may facilitate corporate farms and someone could come through and buy up a whole line of farms. Was that something that was discussed?

ES: No, we cannot. We have a state law that would prevent that. You can't come into the state as a corporation and buy farms. There's no way. That's just a false statement. The land would have to be sold to private individuals or to a corporation that exists now that we limit the amount of land that they can buy in one particular year, and I don't know the percentage. No way can these corporations come in and buy up big hunks of farm, no way.

EN: So one of the purposes of the bill was to provide another alternative for people in terms of having their land condemned.

ES: You're saying on the farm condemnation or the whole farm or?

EN: Yes, I was wondering why a whole farm option as opposed to the way it was done now.

ES: Well, I think it maybe satisfied some people. See, you get an option or you can an easement, and maybe—I think the easement is 160 feet. And that's the easement that you have to go and drive your equipment on and to build and construct it, and that's what they pay you for—the use of that easement—because of damage that could occur by them traveling on this, whatever, you know. Let's not forget in many places there would be fences or, say, they'd break a tile or, you know, do a certain amount of damage. That's confined to that 160 feet.

Now some people thought, 'Why should I give an easement or why should I condemn only, you know, that area, the 160 feet? Why not, if they want it, let them have the whole farm.' And, of course, it made some people happy, maybe, to condemn the whole farm then.

EN: Do you think there were any alternatives to the line? You mentioned need earlier. Some people have said, "Well, why not build the plant close to the Twin Cities and move the coal or put it over the freeways or something like this?"

ES: Well, certainly there were alternatives before all this was done. There is no alternative after everything is—you could say—settled. The plant was built, the loan was made, the route was established. And when the route was established within the corridor is when all this opposition rolls up. The plant was already far along. It's nearly completed today. Costing, I don't know, something like \$400 million. I don't know what it costs. I'm just—it's a figure—a very conservative figure. Maybe it cost a billion, the whole outlay. There is no alternative after you have it. What are you going to do with it when you've got it? You have to build a line. The line's got to go some place. And all the agencies have said that that's where the line is supposed to go.

EN: How about future lines to meet future needs. Do you have any preferences or any views on what sorts of things could be done, other than a high voltage transmission line?

ES: I have no idea how we could improve it, because I'm sure that if—Let's put it this way. No one, including you and me, likes a tower. I don't think it is a thing of beauty. It may not

hurt you, but we don't mind it when it sets on somebody else's property or far enough away from us. We never take a look at where our electricity comes from when we push a button. We never look on whose land we're driving on when we drive from Minneapolis to Fargo, even though this I-94 splits, not one farm, but it splits all these farms, and that land is out of production forever.

Like I said, no one likes to take it, but some people have to make the sacrifice. There's no way that we can acquire right-of-way—we're going back and plowing the same ground—without the right of eminent domain, because we have to have it so that we can make the connections, so we can bring electricity or so that we could connect Minneapolis with Fargo by a road, and it's the same thing for railroad, pipelines, whatever.

So I see no different approach than a study being made so that the people have some voice and can say, "Well, this, I believe, is where it should go." And after the decision has been made—because you're just as important as I am when it comes to a tower, regardless of what kind of land we have—if the tower is as close to you and to me, and our land is even not on a par—I think it's not the question of what the land is. I'm saying the question is the line and the tower. It's immaterial where it sets. It doesn't change the appearance of the tower.

EN: Is hauling the coal a viable alternative? Moving it from the coal fields to a plant near the Twin Cities?

ES: Well, that's a very good question. The decision, of course, is made whether or not we should haul all this coal—I don't know how many carloads it takes every day or trainloads, I mean, full trainloads of coal to supply the power, like in Becker or other areas where coal-fired plants are being built. I know they built a special railroad into that Becker plant, and those coal cars or coal trains are going to come. Now, of course, you have the pollution when you have the plant here. You have to transport the coal. You have the risk of the train running over men, women and children in automobiles on crossings from the coal fields to the plant. I don't know. You got to make all those decisions.

First of all, what is cheaper? I think that's all about trying to figure out what's cheaper. I think it's the economy of the whole thing that is making that decision. We build it out here, and we've got the coal right under our, you know, right in the shed out here. You've got your woodpile by your front door. I don't know. I'm not wise enough to make a study of whether it's more feasible.

Another thing is, if you've got the plant here, you've got all that pollution, which is tons and tons and tons of fly ash every day. And environmentalists, of course—well, this is another story. But the same plant that's up in North Dakota right now, at one time was proposed to go in near Aitkin, and the reason it wasn't put in in Aitkin is because of various complaints of people—pollution, environmentalists, the transfer of coal coming in here, the tracks, the tying up of crossings in small towns when the railroad runs through, when the trains come—all these things. They decided to put it out there.

I'm sure the men who made the decision put it out there were thinking that this was more feasible than building the plant in Aitkin. I don't know if you ever heard some of these things. Have you been interviewing people? Am I the first one on this or...?

EN: No, there are some other ones, but it's good to hear—

[Tape interruption]

It's been suggested to me that this could possibly be a rural versus urban struggle, that the metropolitan people are going to benefit and the rural people are going to be hurt. Do you see this as sort of an issue? In the legislature, are you working with other representatives and senators from an urban area?

ES: What you're saying is that this line could develop into a urban-rural issue? That the rural people would say, "Well, we've got to furnish—we've got to make the sacrifices so that urban people would have the power?" Is that what you're saying?

EN: Yes.

ES: No, I think in this particular case—but this could very well be in some other line. In this line, if I understand correctly, nearly thirty to ninety percent of the power is going to be used exclusively by the thirty-four co-ops in the UPA-CPA organization.

EN: So this would be directly spread to the rural areas.

ES: Right. And the other thing I think that should be pointed out is that there will be a surplus coming on this line for about eighteen months. There will be a surplus. This surplus goes into, I understand, a pool, and it may be funneled to metropolitan areas. It may be funneled anywhere in the Midwest, as far as St. Louis and, I believe, Chicago. It goes into a pool, this power. Now for eighteen months, there is surplus. At about eighteen months that would be enough to furnish the needs of the patrons on the co-ops. And after eighteen months or within two years there will be—it'll be short again. Then they have to buy. So it's all on record, as to who gets it, where it is, how it's used, and who uses it and how much. All the co-ops—the Public Service Commission has all the records of the power that is used by the patrons of the organization.

EN: Has there been some place here where the communication may have broken down then between the people out there who are saying that the metropolitan people are getting all this electricity?

ES: The communication has broken down because it's been used by people to make a case against the line. They have used people. They have used arguments. They have used what I call crutches. You can't blame them for trying to get support to stop the line. They have had

testimony by some people that would—it's absolutely false. But they are spreading it and why not? Anything they can do—

EN: Have you noticed here if it's followed party lines in terms of legislature?

ES: No, I don't think so. I don't think it has anything to do with party lines. I think it affects Republicans, Democrats, independents, American Party, you name it. Sometimes you find individuals who are cheerleaders, whether they be Democrats, Republicans or whatnot, trying to make what we call some brownie points or hay on a situation, either supporting it or whatever. And politics being what it is, issues are used when they can be used to anyone's advantage. I think that's been done. I wouldn't deny it.

EN: Wouldn't it have been a lot easier for you to be a very strong person in opposition to the line? I mean, like you say, you know these people. They're the people you have to take pressure from. Wouldn't it have been easier for you to do it that way?

ES: To be with the people?

EN: Yes, or I mean to politically come out and say that, yes, all these things are true.

ES: I did. You mean to the powerline, to the opposition?

EN: To the opposition.

ES: I've told them exactly how it's going to be. I've told them they're going to win a couple battles. They're going to lose the war. The line is going to be built. I've been honest with these people. Sometimes for your honesty you get condemned. I could have said what they would like to hear, you know.

I wouldn't stoop that low. I wouldn't do that to these people. These people are my constituents. These people are my friends, I would like to say. And these people are somebody that I have to look out for. But I cannot put these people, even though they are the victims in this particular case, I can't take their mind away and say, "Now I'll make a victim over here. I'll kill Joe—if you use it as an example—I'll kill Joe to, you know, take it away from John." I'm not going to do that.

I've been honest. I'm telling these people that we have to have this power, and they don't deny it. The line's got to go some place. They don't deny that. They say, "Yes, but not here." I told them that I'm not going to fight to take it away from you and put it up here. I'm not going to even be that selfish that I would say I'll push it out of my district and put it to the next man, the next senator's district, because the problem is not going to go away.

If there's a health hazard, that'll go with the line. If you don't like the tower, well, the tower looks as bad up there as it does here. Whatever. How can I be more honest than that? I don't know. I haven't got a chance.

EN: There's been some talk, and last week the people were down here demanding that the legislature declare a moratorium on that. Is that a solution or is that confusing the problem again?

ES: Well, the only thing that I can say is when those people demand a moratorium that they're asking for something that is not possible. They may very well ask and get a moratorium on future construction, but you cannot declare a moratorium when the court has said that there can be no interference with the construction of this line, and when every issue that has been presented has been resolved by the courts. There's no such a thing as having a moratorium on anything like this. I just can't believe that it can be done.

Let's just say it would be done, and somebody would say, "Well, it's right." The court would still have to rule on it, and I can't see how in the world they could say that, yes, there should be a moratorium, because now I'm not an attorney, like I said, I'm just a plain old dirt farmer. But just to use common sense, a moratorium on future construction until all the studies are in. In this particular case—no way. That's my honest opinion. I believe that I'm right because it couldn't be effective in regards to stopping the construction of this line.

EN: This is sort of a two-part question. How do you view the situation as it stands now, and what do you see the outlook for the future as being? Do you think there's any way to resolve this or...?

ES: The problems, the controversy out there, how do I view this today?

EN: Yes.

ES: First of all, I don't like to see it. Again I have to come back and say how do I view the decision that has been made, first by the courts, right, and then by the governor to go out there, and the governor says, "We shall furnish protection so that this line can be constructed." And the construction workers will be protected by the troopers that he sent out there. I can only say that I have to support the governor's decision.

I can openly state an opinion, that I believe, that it doesn't seem right to me, but on the other hand, it is pure contempt. When you meet in the morning wherever and—which they're doing, and they discuss the actions of that day, who should carry the flag and who should get arrested. It's a form of conspiracy against the system. It is organized revolution. There's no other word for this—because this is a court order. It's not a regulation. It's a court order. There is a difference. You go to court and you defy the judge, you know what happens. You'll be in contempt. When these people go out there, fully aware of what they intend to do, what they have planned to do, like I said, of who should carry the flag and who should get arrested, I think it's pre-meditated. It is pre-empted. And they follow up—usually they follow up on what they're going to do.

I think it's wrong. I cannot support anything, but the governor is going to uphold the law in supplying the troops to uphold the court order. And that's just as simple as that. Regardless of how I feel. I feel otherwise maybe. I don't like a 55-mile-an-hour speed limit, but I have to abide by it. If I get caught violating it, what excuse have I got? Saying I didn't know it? Out here this is even worse. Like I said, this is a court order. So, many people maybe feel differently, maybe feel like they don't have to obey a court order, because it's an injustice to bring in the eminent domain and the rights of people are being run over. It's not at all that. It's all settled. It's all settled.

EN: Do you have any feelings about what might happen, how this might be resolved or where it's leading?

ES: Well, I cannot control the minds nor the actions of the people involved. I don't think that the protest will get any less. But I think that the enforcing of the rules to stay away and not interfere is going to get stricter. And not because they want to be, you know, not low key. I think it's because the people are going to push as far as they can, because they're going to do it anyway. Their mind is made up. They're going to do it they say. They're going to do it. They want to get arrested. I think that in the future, you're going to see somebody arrested that hasn't been arrested for what was the same act before that, but because— That's just my personal opinion, and I just don't see why it should change. I don't think the people will give up, even though they are defying a court order.

EN: Do you think that this whole controversy will have an effect on similar lines in the future, and with the energy situation being what it is, will it have implications for Minnesota energy development?

ES: It will have if you have the same kind of people brought in. What we have out here right now is what we call a group of professionals. We have, you could call them, I think, people that have been convicted of draft evasion, professional protestors, possibly flag-burners who are out there today offering leadership, offering advice, instructing them what to do, how to get the sympathy of the people.

Now I don't know what these people are there for, really. I don't know. They're not at all affected by either—no relative, but the people out there seem to accept them as— Well, if he's on our side— They seem to accept anyone. If the devil comes, they say, "Welcome aboard." These same people that are out there today, if they would have been in the area seven, eight years ago, they wouldn't have had a chance. Nobody would speak to them. In fact, they'd have been booted right off of their farms and out of the townships. Today they welcome them with open arms, and even listen to them for leadership and instructions, and that's documented.

EN: So it's had quite an impact on the structure of the community or the people out there in terms of the whole controversy. It's changed their feelings about government or...

ES: The people out there?

EN: Yes.

ES: What it has done and what it is continuing to do is it is setting farmer against farmer. Let's not forget that you have people who are going to get hit by this line, who are in favor of it, who are going to have towers on their property, who have and will sign an easement, but they have no choice. Families have been threatened. Their farms have been threatened, their livestock, their buildings. So they have to more or less throw some visual support behind them and show up, because they can't possibly say, "I'm against you." There are people that don't agree with what's going on. They haven't got a chance.

This is not only the case of farmers against farmer. It's farmer against businesses. They have gone to businesses and demanded that they get support from them. Now this is all in trying to make their case, and I think that maybe they're right, at least they try to get power in what they believe in. They try to get support. Like I said in this particular case, I think it's wrong because of the court order. I have no other place, and they have no other place to go to the courts, but they have the idea now that the state is against them, courts are against them, people are against them. The farmers are against them. Business is against them. The whole world is against them.

If we eliminate all the factors involved, the line as a 400kV line, if there is no health hazard, if you build that line a 100kVs less than the biggest line in the state today, they would still say, "We don't want the line." I know this for a fact. They have told me there will be no line built here. Even if you had a law, that wouldn't allow them to energize this line to 400kV.

We have lines running around the metropolitan area here, which I think are greater and more powerful than that one. But nobody knows about it, because there are no ill effects. Sometimes, like I said, I don't know if the people want to find out the facts. Many times they say, "Well, our minds are made up, and we don't want any line."

EN: I'm sure you've been asked this question before, especially by critics of the line, and maybe your position, but if the line had gone across your farm, would you have reacted differently?

ES: You know, that's a good question. It's hard to say. It's hard to say because how can you express feelings of individuals? How can you explain the taste of an apple, if you never tasted the apple? In this particular case, it's only those people that are directly affected. So, the question is not whether my reaction would have been different. I think the question is whether I would have taken the decisions that have been rendered differently. Reaction to the line would have been maybe the same. I would say like nine out of ten people would say, "Well, I don't like to see this line or a big tower in my front yard, you know, or my backyard, wherever."

But there are people that feel differently about the court decision. Some people ignore it totally, to the point where they're willing to get arrested in defying it. The next one will say, well...

[Tape interruption]

You know, the one guy'll accept a decision, and he'll say, "Well, it's settled. The court has ruled on it, and we have no other place to go. So, there's nothing that we can do," where some of the people out there now are saying, "We don't care what the court said. We don't care who says it. We are going to do this. We're going to fight them. We're going to get arrested. We're going to do everything possible." That's the difference between people.

I think, like I said, or trying to answer your question—whether I would have reacted differently. I don't know. It all depends on how much or how people accept a decision.

EN: In the interest of time, I think we've covered pretty much everything, unless there's something you notice on here. I'll just open it up to you to give any final comments or comment on anything we haven't covered.

ES: No, I don't think the governors could have handled it any differently, outside of—I think that Governor Perpich handled it correctly. If he made a mistake, it was in going out to the farmers, in trying to talk to them, because they thought that now somebody is going to listen to them, and he's promised that the situation would be resolved in the legislative session of 1977.

We did make some real big changes. We eliminated the part that said the skunk had a greater priority than their kids or their livestock. We eliminated some of the diagonal crossings. We, I'm sure, tried to do everything we could to help the situation. Of course, that's what the governor had in mind, but that's not at all what these people expected. The overall expectations of the people were that he would stop the line.

At one time, he did declare a moratorium, and that was only with the consent of the power companies, or the contractor, or the contractor and the power company. If they want to willingly stop construction for a week or two, that's their prerogative, but there's no moratorium that the governor can say, "I have the power to stop that line. I have the power to declare a moratorium." No way. I don't think the legislature has the right to declare a moratorium. We could very well pass that, where only the legislative branch and the judiciary branch would be the courts and the judges and the juries. They would be who would say that it's legal or it's illegal, and you can't do that.

This is about all that I can think of. Like I said, I hope that these people will come to accept it. They bring up the health hazards, and I'm sure that I won't be alone in saying that they don't even have to come to us if it is found that lines of this type are dangerous, because we have existing lines. The line will be stopped. There is no question about that. Or it'll be cut back to a point where it is safe, if it affects people, livestock or even crops. I think the compensation that the co-ops have offered the farmer—in Stearns County, for instance, an average of \$33-34,000 a mile, which comes out to about \$8,500 a pole, and higher or lower depending on— The damages are very adequate. They can take it to court.

They have access to the courts and condemnation to see if the court would award them a bigger, better verdict, more damages.

I just I wish I had the solution to—I wish I could feel like those people do. Maybe there is a fear here, a fear of the unknown, which—maybe it's realistic. But I believe there is some fear, but there is also some fear that is preached. What I mean is, it's brought up. People believe someone in leadership role that would say something that would scare them, scare the hell out of them. You know when someone gets scared, you don't know what's going to happen. So I just hope that we get by out here without someone winding up in the hospital or even getting killed. That's maybe what will resolve it in the end. That will be the end.

The damages that these people have—they have been arrested. They have been charged with obstruction. They've been charged with damaging tractors and equipment. I don't know. If they have to pay this, who's going to pay it? I think they're fearful of all those things. I think they're fearful of the charges that the attorney, their legal counsel, has a right to collect. I don't know who's going to pay it. All these people that are there today are going to be asked to pay? Only those people that say—or belong to an organization, have they signed names? Have they signed membership? Who is the attorney going to deal with? When he says, I've worked for you for five years—I'm just bringing this up. You think that he's doing this for gratis, that he's doing this for nothing? I can't believe that. Someone has to pay. Now has he got one? Who? Is it an organization? Is it, I don't know, CURE, they call themselves CURE, and different ones.

Well anyway, it's been a pleasure to give you my honest opinion. Nobody has told me what to say. What I said is my honest belief. It is my convictions. I didn't try to fool anybody. If I can help in some way or could help in some way, I wouldn't run away. I would do it, or do anything to pacify these people. But it seems they won't accept it, at least the people that are protesting. The leadership won't accept. Many people out there are accepting the verdict, and that's, I think, what I'm trying to say.

So I want to thank you.

EN: Okay, and thank you.

ES: Yes.