

FOR AFFORDABLE ENERGY

Guest Column By David Jenkins

David Jenkins is the manager of the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association



Fight Rail Rip-Offs

All of us will be affected in the coming months by rising costs for home heating fuel and electricity. Some reasons—natural disasters—we can't control; some, we can mitigate with sensible planning, regulatory and tax policies.

Most solutions will need some time to have any effect. But there are exceptions.

One is conservation, something each of us can do right away for a modest but direct impact on our monthly bills and on overall energy supplies.

Another important thing to do immediately is join the fight against price-gouging by railroads that transport fuel to power plants.

In 1980 the United States had 40 major railroads. Now, just four own more than 90 percent of the nation's track miles. This decline in rail competition has led to more "captive shippers" with no alternative but to pay increasing rates for indifferent service.

At an annual meeting of co-op leaders in the Twin Cities recently, John Holt of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association described the four dominant railroads as having "high rates and a take-it-or-leave-it attitude." The results are hard to swallow but easy to explain.

Dairyland Power Cooperative is a captive shipper. The La Crosse-based generation and transmission cooperative provides electricity for more than half a million members of local distribution co-ops in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois. In 2004, one of two railroads hauling Wyoming coal eastward failed to deliver more than 25 percent of scheduled shipments, causing a 10-percent spike in Dairyland's fuel budget. Similar failures to deliver have shrunk coal supplies for a number of Midwest utilities, forcing them into the spot market to buy power they might otherwise generate themselves.

There are consequences beyond the obvious ones. Utilities have to pay more on the spot market, increasing costs for their own customers, but the purchases also

drive up demand for electricity from natural gas-fired merchant power plants. With natural gas prices at historic highs, we don't need unreliable rail deliveries increasing supply-and-demand pressure on our most widely used home heating fuel.

Though coal delivery already costs Dairyland more than coal itself, its shipping costs on the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Railroads will double in 2006. That means freight charges of roughly \$80 million for about \$35 million worth of coal. Costs will rise for distribution cooperatives, which will have no choice but to increase rates as much as 15 to 20 percent.

At the local, state, and national levels, America's electric cooperatives are fighting back against unconscionable shipping rates and poor service.

(Continued on page 28 ►)

Government Contacts

Congressman Ron Kind

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IT JUST ADDS UP

32 Years of Service

The face that never stops smiling. Arnie Kappus! Keeping pace with the retirement crowd, Arnie retired at the beginning of January.

For the last several years, Arnie has been our stock clerk and maintenance person. He has had one of the tightest inventory controls around; at year end when the auditors came, his area was almost always accounted for. Being in a very old building means having a very old boiler (very big) to give us heat. Every cold weekend, Arnie would come in and start the boiler up to make sure the office was warm for everyone. Arnie was the tops at customer service; however, the vast majority of the members never saw him.

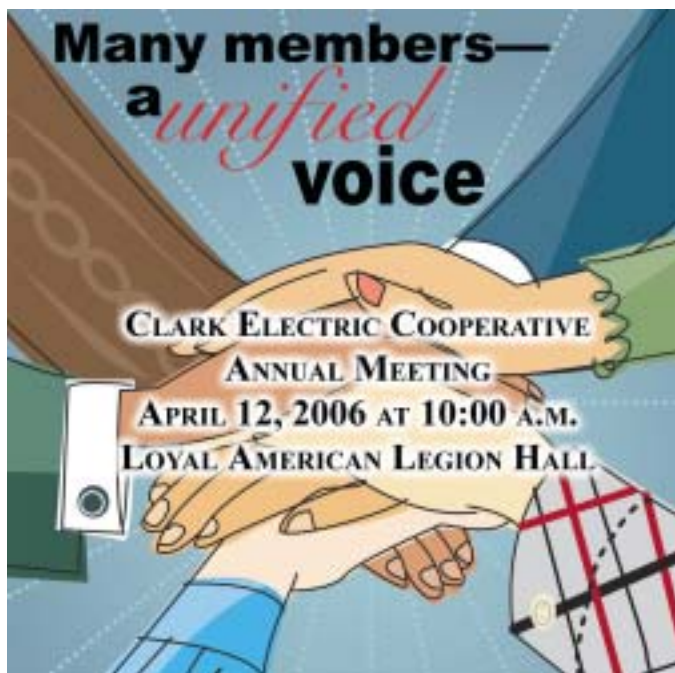
Arnie has plenty to keep him busy in retirement. First, his wife, Edna, has plenty of chores for him to do. Second, he loves to hunt turkeys (being a big one himself). If you are out in the woods during the spring hunt and start hearing “shoot...shoot...shoot,” it’s probably us talking to Arnie.

Arnie, Edna, and their daughter, Carrie, love going to country music concerts during the summer.

On the serious side, Arnie has contributed a great deal over the years to Clark Electric Cooperative and especially to the Greenwood community. He will be missed on a daily basis. ■



Above: Arnie Kappus ready for retirement after 32 years of providing dedicated service to Clark Electric. Below: Arnie in the early years operating the old FWD. What a truck...what a guy!



**Many members—
a unified
voice**

**CLARK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
ANNUAL MEETING
APRIL 12, 2006 AT 10:00 A.M.
LOYAL AMERICAN LEGION HALL**



SCHOLARSHIPS DUE
Must be at the cooperative's office by **\$750**
March 3, 2006
Applications are online
www.cecoop.com



MORE LOCAL NEWS

Delivery Cost Increasing

(Continued from page 4)

Whether you're a co-op member or not, these problems affect



you. The good news is you can help do something about it.

Congress is considering two proposals, the Railroad Competition Act (S.919 in the Senate; H.R. 2047 in the House,) and the Railroad Antitrust and Competition Act (H.R. 3318). The first would promote competition between rail carriers and more affordable redress of grievances through the federal regula-

tory system. The second would eliminate the railroads' antitrust exemption, allowing action against anticompetitive practices.

A short note in support of these measures to your U.S. Senators and members of Congress will show that voters are aware of freight rail abuse and ready to push back.

Though the word "energy" doesn't appear in the titles of these bills, helping enact them as federal law will be one of the best investments in affordable energy anyone can make. ■

David Jenkins

Manager,

Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association

SAVING MONEY

WITH ENERGY PRICES GOING UP

Conserving energy is even more important now than ever. We still have many months of the heating season left. You can still do things to your house to help you save energy this year.

Stay away from portable electric heaters; they use a lot of energy without much benefit to you. Block heaters also use a lot of energy. If you have block heaters, plug them in for only the minimum amount of time needed to warm the engine. You may have to experiment a little to find that minimum.

Costs to operate tank heaters for livestock waterers can also add up during the winter. Can you reduce the number of heaters you use? This will help in the long run.

Home heating is another major item in terms of energy costs. Some of the most effective

steps you can take to lower costs are also some of the least costly. Stop the wind by installing storm windows and making sure that all windows are properly closed. You can even put shrink wrap around the inside of the windows—this really works. Also, check doors for leaks; if you find leaks, use some weatherstripping to block up the infiltration.

To help your furnace operate at its best, it is very important to change the filter regularly. A programmable thermostat is also great; just dial back the thermostat when you're not home or when you're sleeping—it's all automatic. Set the thermostat higher for the times when you are home so the house is a desirable temperature. And just by setting back the thermostat a degree or two and putting on a sweater, you can help save lots of energy. Make sure that your water heater is set no

higher than 120 degrees; this will save lots of energy.

Now here is something very important—with the high cost of energy, people are switching to wood burners. Make sure that you have the flue pipes or chimney checked and cleaned to help prevent a fire. Also, make sure you have working smoke detectors around your bedrooms and in other parts of the house. ■

For more information, contact:

Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corp.:
www.weccusa.org

Wisconsin Public Service Commission:
<http://psc.wi.gov/consumerinfo/tips/heatingsafety.htm>

U.S. Department of Energy:
www.energy.gov

Energy Center of Wisconsin:
www.ecw.org

Clark Electric Cooperative:
www.cecoop.com

LETTERS OF THANKS

Linemen Who Helped Restore Power in Louisiana Get Letters

Several letters of thanks were sent to the Wisconsin electric cooperatives' contingent of linemen who went to Louisiana this past fall to help rebuild another co-op's system that was totally destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. ■

Lineman Ken Martini, Apprentice Lineman Scott Bailen, Lineman Jeff Block, and Apprentice Lineman Mike Hackel were recently awarded a certificate and a special patch honoring their commitment to community. Not pictured: Lineman Troy Bauer



Robert E. Prensio
P.O. Box 815
Folsom, Louisiana 70437-0815
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December 9, 2005

October 10, 2005
PO Box 190
Greenwood, WI 54437-0190

Dear Clark EC,

I would like to say thank you for giving us power. If it wasn't for you we would probably still be like we were. During the storm I felt so scared about when we got back what would be there. Also thanks for putting power back in school because all of the children need an education. So thanks and may god bless you.



Sincerely,

Teanna Sandifer

GREENWOOD, WISCONSIN 54437-0190

Dear Timothy E. Stewart

I would like to say thank you for getting our lights back on. I don't know how many days or weeks I couldn't live with out lights. Around my house is a mess. We had a tree on our house. At my dads only his garage fell in his entire garage got mess up. I want to thank you again.

Thank you,

Robyn Nichols

To Whom It May Concern:

August 29, 2005 is a date I will never forget. That is the date "Katrina" devastated southeastern Louisiana and coastal Mississippi. I had indeed seen a hurricane in the past and always came away unscathed. Not so with "Katrina." In many respects, I am still recovering.

One of my longest days following "Katrina," was the day the men of the Wisconsin Corps turned on my electricity. That day was September 28, 2005 at 3:10pm. - 37 days after the storm. It seemed like an eternity, but your men gave me my first happy day after the storm - especially when compared with the following recovery dates: Phone service restored October 9th, - 39 days after the storm, Insurance adjuster arrived - 41 days after the storm, October 16th, FEMA finally showed up - 49 days after the storm, and Cable Service restored November 17th, - 58 days after the storm.

Though it seemed like an eternity, our WST and your Wisconsin crews were first to give us, the residents of Merrywood Estates near Folsom, LA, the first sliver of recovery. To that end, my wife and I want to give all of your men a heartfelt - THANK YOU AND A JOB WELL DONE.

My wife was so excited to find the electricity on when she got home from work, she made me drive to find your trucks as they were leaving the site, so that she could thank them personally. When your guys gathered around to find out what she wanted, she said, "Wow, you guys are all some good looking." Your men enjoyed that. I don't think they expected that from the mouth of a 60's Chinese woman.

Please thank all of them for us. We thank them for their work, their endurance of our heat and humidity and for enduring our "love bugs".

Sincerely,
Robert E. Prensio



Address - Entebbe Electric Coop, Seward Electric Coop, Clark Electric Coop, Eau Claire Energy Coop, Stoddard Electric Coop, Riverview Electric Coop, Rock County Electric Coop, North West Energy Coop (please specify on #3 label outside of mail box.)

CLARK RECEIVES AWARD

Clark Electric Cooperative received a certificate for 2005 for participation in the Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE). The presentation was made at the WECA annual meeting in Bloomington, Minnesota, in November.

State ACRE Chairman and NRECA Wisconsin Director Bob Kretschmar is shown presenting a certificate to Clark Electric Director Chuck Bena. The cooperative achieved certain levels of membership in the political action organization. The award was for 100-percent board and key staff participation in ACRE. ■

