Shift strategies to face new labor force, new economy, new opportunities in state

Second of two articles.
In the not-too-distant past, people might well have looked on today's tight labor market as something of an am come true. Today's low unemployment and rising wages are enough by themselves to make most politicians sleep easy at night.

But changes in the labor force and the economy offer both pitfalls and opportunities for employers, workers, the Twin Cities region and the state as a whole.
This week, the Citizens League released a new policy report on the labor shortage, entitled Help Wanted: More Opportunities Than People, cochaired by Gary Cunningham of the Humphrey Institute and Steve Keefe of Honeywell. In its report the League outlines a number of strategies to help government, business and non-profits make the transition to a new labor force and a new economy, including recommendations relating to K-12 and higher education, workforce development to improve overall productivity.

For the last 40 years, public policy has been fixated on creating jobs in an effort to absorb hundreds of thousands of people entering the labor force for the first time. But, as outlined in the article in last month's Minnesota Journal, the region and state can expect a significant slowdown in the growth of the labor force in the coming decades. Economic development efforts-both public and private-
Continued on page 5

School districts need flexibility to change

“OK: You folks are serious about kids having to learn. So you’d better get equally serious about letting us create the kind of schools in which kids do learn.”

That’s the message coming to the state in ’99 from leaders on the education side of Minnesota education. “As you (legislat-ors sharpen your expectations of us you need to relax your prescrip-
tions for us,” is the way Don Helmstetter, superintendent in Spring

by Ronald A. Wirtz

by Mark Hinds

“You have to expect some noise when you live by an airport.”
“They knew the airport was there when they moved in.”

These are some of the common responses to the plight of Richfield residents from people who live outside the south metro area or in Greater Minnesota. Although there is some truth to these statements, they do not provide a compelling case for inaction.
Yet, inaction is all the City of Richfield has received from the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) and local Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) officials. The city has been asking the MAC and the FAA to mitigate the impacts of the proposed north/south runway since 1991. The MAC wants to place the new runway two blocks from residential homes built for returning World War II veterans. The best the Commission could do was to declare this new noise an unresolved impact in their Final Environmental Impact Statement.

The fact is that Richfield was here
Continued on page 6
Minnesota: Land of more opportunities than people

Newspoint

Lyle Wray

Editors want fix to broken party endorsement system

Mankato Free Press said (Sept. 25) the process of party endorsement in Minnesota "has deteriorated," (rather than the 23 originally projected) in 12 of the metro communities (rather than the 14 originally projected) the state Board of Education will hold one-third of St. Cloud teachers for new teacher candidates. In fact, there is a "stalemate" in the use of the average-value tax and the percent over which the tax is assessed. The corrected calculations show that the tax from 1997 to 1998 was assessed at 1.05, not at the 1.03 that was reported. This error makes a significant difference in the calculation of the average-value tax and the percent over which it is assessed. The error in the calculation of the average-value tax and the percent over which it is assessed could have a large impact on the average-value tax and the percent over which it is assessed. The error in the calculation of the average-value tax and the percent over which it is assessed could have a large impact on the average-value tax and the percent over which it is assessed. The error in the calculation of the average-value tax and the percent over which it is assessed could have a large impact on the average-value tax and the percent over which it is assessed. The error in the calculation of the average-value tax and the percent over which it is assessed could have a large impact on the average-value tax and the percent over which it is assessed.

Clariication and correction

The Minnesota Journal

Publisher--Lyle Wray

Contributing Editor--Todd Kohls

Skirkey--Ray Hannum

The Minnesota Journal is a publication of the Citizens League, a Minnesota nonpartisan public policy research organization. The Journal is available online at www.minnesotalogicaljournal.org.

Some of the examples of things our organization, PPL, is working on include: preserving and improving what already exists; ensuring that everyone has access to affordable housing; and creating new, affordable ownership opportunities.

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What are some of the examples of how our organization, PPL, is working on include: preserving and improving what already exists; ensuring that everyone has access to affordable housing; and creating new, affordable ownership opportunities.

How did we get into this position?

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Business involvement spurs affordable housing gains

Edited excerpts of remarks by Steve Hanson, executive director, Project for Public Inclusion in Local Leagues on Oct. 4.

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How did we get into this position?
Continued from page 1

In 1946, the airport eventually to be known as Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport (MSP) averaged 84 flights a day. This compares to an average of 1,800 flights a day planned by MAC by 2010. The difference between the numbers produced by the older-prepared plans and the newer jumbo jets has been likened to the difference between a child riding a bike on the street and a jumbo jet running through your front yard.

In 1986, the Minnesota Legislature initiated the Dual Track Process. This process was designed to study and determine whether to add a new runway to the airport. The airport is built in Dakota County or whether MSP should be expanded. This was the third time in the last 50 years that MSP should be expanded. This was the third time in the last 50 years.

In 1996, the conclusion of the Dual Track Process in 1996, with the conclusion that MSP should be expanded. The conclusion of the Dual Track Process was that MSP should be expanded. The conclusion of the Dual Track Process was that MSP should be expanded.

Throughout its history MSP has consistently doubled the number of aircraft operations it handles every 10 to 15 years—in essence, providing the metro area with several new airports over its history.

A man from the ever-increasing Twin Cities area continues to the Gold Concourse.

A new Humphrey Terminal with six gates and room for 13 more.

A new north/south runway parallel to the east side of Richfield. The new runway will include new cargo facilities, new taxiways and, by 2010, an estimated 10,000 plus aircraft operations a year.

The Twin Cities Cluster has established a number of regional economic development programs, many of which are supported by the airport.

Apple’s approach to economic development is one strategy to move to an “eco-clustering” approach for economic development. Industry clusters are groups of interrelated businesses that can provide a competitive advantage of global markets. Such a strategy opens up new investment vehicle for the expansion of related lines of business. Successful industry clusters include companies that create or upgrade technology infrastructure, such as software and computers, or printing and publishing, and include medical services, medical devices, and equipment that creates a critical industry.”

The Twin Cities Cluster has the industry clustering approach for over a decade, but in limited fashion. The industry clustering approach is often supported by the airport.

Although awareness is growing in both the K-12 and higher education sectors, the airport is still a critical airport. Although awareness is growing in both the K-12 and higher education sectors, the airport is still a critical airport.

For its part, the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development (DEED) has used the economic development industry cluster approach for over a decade, but in limited fashion. The industry clustering approach is often supported by the airport.

The Twin Cities Cluster has the industry clustering approach for over a decade, but in limited fashion. The industry clustering approach is often supported by the airport.
Education
Continued from page 1

Their initiative has significant political implications. Reform Party Governor-elect Jesse Ventura says he wants to reduce taxes, and the scope of government as regulator, strengthen local decision-making and have the best public schools in the state. However, the superintendents’ initiative is clearly his reform program.

Basically, the superintendents are seeking the Legislature to provide an adequate system. Under current rules, they say, districts cannot change learning programs quickly enough to help kids not doing well and cannot protect revenue for programs and class sizes against the demands of the salary settlement.

“Approval”-the hot word in education policy these days—means money to many people, Saint Paul’s “adequacy” lawsuit against the state is clearly about money. And in this case, that money is a key part of the revenues for the schools and the condition is that the state must spend a certain amount for those revenues to pass. The state must also have the services it needs to meet the standard of education.

“The state really has no alternative. Having said kids must learn, it now cannot deny the districts the freedom to create schools different enough to ensure learning happens.”

Labor
Continued from page 5

programs for this population. The labor shortage provides a good test ground to see what programs truly work for employers and workers alike.

The WTA consolidates the morass of 100-plus federal programs into three block grant programs, giving states considerable flexibility and auditing “what works,” employers & workers, and program design. With this new control and authority, the state now has a prime opportunity to institute more competition and put “performance tests” into the worker training system.

Specifically, the League says the state should put programs at risk for funding. Performance data must be collected and published to allow the state, employers, and the public to rate the programs’ ability to produce good outcomes.

The League also points out that jobs and skill-training for low-wage workers are wrongly seen as mutually exclusive. For people with no work experience, the most fundamental skills are those that can only be learned on the job. Initial training for these workers often involves on-the-job training for and obtaining jobs, along with “soft” skill training (e.g., promptness, proper attire, relationships with coworkers and supervisors).

Additional skill development for these workers is critical, but training programs often lose contact with trainees after they are placed in a job. This often leaves low-skill workers in jobs with few career ladders or opportunities for better paying jobs in the future.

The Minneapolis Urban League, as well as the League itself, has concluded that where there was once consensus that raising the minimum wage was the key to addressing the poverty rate, the conclusion is no longer valid, and that the policy is now seen as a barrier to creating economic opportunities.

The League says that the key to the future is to ensure that all workers have access to pay jobs in the future.

For the reform superintendents, the X-factor is the flexibility to change. Kids failing the tests probably need a different kind of school, rather than simply more of what doesn’t work for them now. This gives them a chance to flexibly test every idea for the public’s interest as aggressively as the unions work for their members’ interests. Boards say it’s the “laborer’s fault for not financing them.” But what is the concept of aeronautics, as well as to...also requires the dynamics of student choice and student-based financing.

In 1999 this management push for flexibility is likely to ram head-on into the drive by the unions to get a bigger say for teachers in deciding what school is. They have long wanted to make “professional development”-class size, teaching methods, assignments-a mandatory subject of bargaining.

This is now opposed fiercely by the MSBA. Its lobbyist, Bob Meeks, told the membership August 14 that if boards up this class management right, they will have no choice left. Traditionally Democratic boards would be expected to side with the unions, which try always to preserve the status quo. They are the Democrats’ contributing constituency. But the politics of education are changing. Increasingly, Democrats have “X”ed out their voting constancy.

It is in the heart of the Democratic constituency (as Gallup polls for the Kappan magazine show) that support for choice, for example, is highest and rising rapidly: in big cities and rural areas, among people of average income, people who haven’t gone beyond high school, people of color, public-school parents, people whose kids are not doing well, younger people, women.

The state is an “X” factor that superintendents must be able to work with for their purpose. If it becomes clear that the state is too set in its ways, then the districts will have to do what they want to do and be held accountable.

The state needs to change. For the reform superintendents the X-factor is the flexibility to change. Kids failing the tests probably need a different kind of school, rather than simply more of what doesn’t work for them now. This gives them a chance to flexibly test every idea for the public’s interest as aggressively as the unions work for their members.

Continued on page 7

Minnesotans to the public.”

“I’m now trying as hard as I can to explain to my constituents about the principles of public education, and the principles of public education are this: I will do what is right for the school district. I will try to make sure that the kids are educated properly, and that they are taught. I will work with the teachers and the administration to make sure that the kids are learning what they need to learn.”

Robert Chase, president of the National Education Association, was asked at a dinner at Harvard University September 23 what “public means” in “public education.”

“It is a new word where staffing options are flexible and performance and risk-taking are rewarded, Meaningful change will not occur in the current model until traditional union and management relationships are transformed. Staff-to-staff ratios must include more than the traditional teacher.

The length of the school day and school year must be varied. Achievement must remain constant, but time must be used more flexibly.

Encourage school boards to purchase or buy in any of the district services, including instructional services, from an open market, driven by economics and demands for high-quality results.

Promote technology as a means to deliver education meeting individual needs. Recognize the tremendous potential of technology to alter our notion that education is the product of the local school boards to ensure the standards are met.

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Eliminating counties could leave cities unconnected

An article in the October issue of Governing magazine highlights an interesting trend in New England—the elimination of county governments. Connecticut did away with its county governments years ago, followed by Rhode Island and now Massachusetts. Plagued by inefficiency, waste and debt, people are electing to completely eliminate, rather than recreate, their county governments.

The article's author, however, argues that states without counties have cities without connections. For example, the cities of Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven, Connecticut, have no counties to connect the affluent suburbs with the declining inner cities. The author suggests that complete elimination of county governments is not the answer—instead they must be transformed into regional entities to address the problems of sprawl, pollution and public transit plugging metropolitan communities across the country.—Kris Lyndon.

Crunch this: Light-rail advocates have traditionally poo-pooed the low-density argument here in the Twin Cities. But some statistics are (hopefully) hard to ignore.

For instance, a comparative study showed that urban densities in Canadian metropolitan cities are almost double those of American cities—26 people per hectare compared with 14 per hectare in a sample of 13 major U.S. cities. Transit made up nine percent of all motorized travel in Canadian cities, versus just three percent in U.S. cities. Similarly, Canadian city dwellers on average drove 40 percent fewer kilometers than their U.S counterparts.

Two information nuggets to overlay this scenario: Per capita transit ridership levels in Canada have plummeted almost 20 percent just since 1990 and the Twin Cities region is among the densest of all metropolitan regions in the low-density United States.—R. Wirtz.

In all the media fun about our new governor, the comment by former state Sen. Gene Merriam that Jesse Ventura will probably be able to "do what needs to be done" sounds quaintly old-fashioned. What is this about what needs to be done? Hey, it's a story!

The new notion of public affairs as Pop came through also in a wonderfully revealing comment by WCCO-TV personality Don Shelby on election night. Around the studio, he said, we advise each other: "Vote the story."

Ah, civic journalism.—Ted Kolderie.

The labor shortage, part I: The new federal Workforce Investment Act has already been lauded as long overdue (see article on page 1), but here's a little piling on by the General Accounting Office about the Job Corps program, a federal training program aimed at addressing employment barriers faced by disadvantaged 16- to 24-year-olds.

In 1996, only 14 percent of program participants had completed all program requirements, according to a July GAO report. The Labor Department, which administers the program, also reported that 62 percent of participants found employment that matched the vocational training received in Job Corps—but the GAO noted that 41 percent of these placements were "questionable.”—R.W.

The demand for warm bodies, part II: A survey of metro businesses indicates that employers are eager to hire "good people" in the old-fashioned sense. Over 2,200 businesses responding to the survey said they had more than 28,000 full-time and part-time jobs available for welfare recipients. When asked to rank the relative importance of various skills, hard skills like math, science, speaking, writing and reading comprehension all ranked comparatively low. In contrast, soft skills—dependability, integrity, cooperation and initiative—were given significantly more value by employers.—R.W.

Anybody wondering what difference the standard-setting the state has unleashed on schools over the past few years has made might find the October issue of the Minneapolis Southwest High School parent newsletter of interest. This issue was clearly the most substantive we've seen as parents now in our sixth year at the school.

The lead article by Principal Robert McCauley reported on progress toward goals established by the school's Leadership Council. One of those goals was to help students pass the state standards tests in reading and math or, at least, to show major improvement toward passing.

McCauley reported in frank terms on the outcomes of the basic skills testing for ninth, 10th and 11th graders. For example, he noted that 36 percent of the 204 ninth graders who took the reading test passed and 34 percent of the 202 ninth graders who took the math test passed—an improvement over the percentage of ninth graders who had passed the previous year.

We knew that a number of students took the skills tests last year and that the school had made a major effort to help kids pass—tutoring, contacting parents, setting aside an entire floor of the school as a quiet area for testing. But reading the newsletter article was the first time we learned that roughly half our son's freshman class last year entered the school without having passed the basic skills tests, either because they hadn't taken them or they had failed them as eighth graders. It was also the first time we learned the outcomes of the testing by grade level.

It's valuable stuff for a school community—staff, students and parents—to know about itself. And that kind of self-reporting and self-testing wasn't happening before.—Dana Schroeder.

Reducing class size is a popular idea. The public instinctively feels it'd help kids (though research shows other strategies are more effective in improving learning). Teachers would just as soon have fewer kids at a time, all other things being equal. Unions like the new jobs and dues-flow. Politicians are delighted with anything both parents and unions like.

But "class size" doesn't come up in the abstract: it comes up as a trade-off about money. For years, given the choice, teachers—at least in the metropolitan area—have been willing to accept larger classes in order to get higher salaries. The most conspicuous example was in the '91 bargaining round in Forest Lake, where the union told the board up-front it would sacrifice 31 teachers' jobs in order to generate the revenue to pay a raise to those more senior.

Where—as in Minneapolis—additional local taxes are condition class-size reduction and the board knows it's dead if it breaks the deal, the pressure to "cash out" class-size for salaries can be resisted. But where it's the new revenue provided by the Legislature, the money is up for grabs. The union wants a raise for its members and the board wants to avoid a strike; shaving a little off class size is a tempting way to settle. Then blame the Legislature for the "cuts" and class sizes that result.—T.K.

Contributors to "Take Note" include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members.

Minnesota Journal
Citizens League
Suite 500
708 S. Third St.
Minneapolis, MN 55415

November 17, 1998
Welcome
New and returning members
Silvia Pratt Conger
Steve Cramer
Thomas Eggum
Tom Fulton
Greg Handberg
Mary Sue Hansen
Clell Hemphill
Luanne Koskinen
Rob Meysembourg
Tom Nelson
Clark Rieke
Michael Rivard
Amy Ryan
Jim Stanton
Virginia Sweatt
Steve Thomas
Imogene Treichel
John Tunheim
Bill Vanderwall
Jim Walker
Avisia Whiteman
Thank you recruiter:
Mary Ann McCoy

Board task force to select new study topic
In October, the Citizens League Board of Directors appointed a task force to consider and recommend potential topics for the next study committee. The task force's first meeting was Wednesday, November 11 and it is expected to meet two more times before the end of the year.

The task force will be chaired by past president Mary Anderson, and include Board members John Adams, Marcia Avner, Scott Brener, Andy Brown, Bill Diaz, Jim Dorsey, Linda Ewen, Steve Keefe, David Olson, Randy Peterson, Orlan Thorbeck, Jane Vanderpoel, and Lee Pao Xiong.

Citizens League members are invited to suggest topics to the task force by filling in the bottom portion of this page and mailing it to the League. Suggestions can also be made by email to info@citizensleague.net.

"We would love to hear from League members who have ideas about what our next topic ought to be," said Anderson. "One of the criteria the League typically uses in selecting a topic is the likelihood that our members will be interested in serving on a committee examining that topic."

When selecting a topic, the League typically asks:
1) what issues does the community need to have addressed?
2) on what issues can the League make the biggest difference? and
3) in terms of "maturity" of an issue, where on the bell curve is this issue located?

Expatriate Canadian Lyle Wray is fond of the Wayne Gretzky hockey metaphor, "skate to where the puck will be." Similarly, the League tries to select topics that anticipate problems and opportunities before they reach the apex of the curve.

Other formal criteria used to evaluate potential topics include level of importance to the community, urgency of finding a solution, prospect for implementation of recommendations, and whether or not the problem is capable of being resolved by reasoned debate.

Finally, the next topic will likely fall within the League's recent portfolio of issues:
1) urban issues; 2) economic and education issues; 3) tax and finance issues; and 4) public leadership.

The Board of Directors is expected to review the recommendations of the task force and approve the charge for the next study committee in the next few months. Recruitment of committee members will begin in early 1999.

What's Bothering You?
Thinking of good League study committee topics can be a formidable undertaking. Former League associate director Paul Gilje said that sometimes the best start is to just think of things that bother you; that identifies topics which leads to policy options which leads to issues. And issues lead to the next League study committee. So go ahead. Tell us what's bothering you. Fill out the form below and mail it to the League office or send us an email.

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Mail to Citizens League 708 South 3rd Street, #500, Minneapolis, MN 55415 or email info@citizensleague.net
Retooling Economic Development:
From Labor Surplus to Shortage

The December Mind-Opener series will showcase the Citizens League's latest report on the labor shortage, Help Wanted: More Opportunities Than People.

Tuesday, December 1
Steve Keefe, Gary Cunningham
co-chairs, Citizens League study committee
Help Wanted: More Opportunities Than People

The remaining sessions will highlight the report's two major recommendations regarding economic development: that Minnesota adopt an industry cluster approach and that workforce development efforts must be improved to increase the productivity of the existing workforce.

Meetings in this series will be at the Holiday Inn Metrodome in Minneapolis from 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

The Role of School Boards: Time for a New Lesson Plan?

Monday, November 23
Sen. Larry Pogemiller
(DFL-Mpls) Chair, Senate K-12 Budget Division

Meetings in this series are at the University Club of St. Paul, 420 Summit Avenue from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.

Cost for Mind-Opener meetings is $10 for League members and $15 for non-members. For more information please call 338-0791. Audio tapes of Mind-Opener meetings are also available at a cost of $8.

Help Wanted

The Citizens League is getting first-hand experience with the current worker shortage. We're looking for a part-time or full-time receptionist/secretary. Duties include answering the phone, processing registrations, clerical support for League study committees and maintaining the League's database. The position has been open since Gayle Ruther left in June. The League has relied on a variety of temps since then. We're willing to think creatively about the position and would entertain part-time, flex-time or job-sharing arrangements. This is a great opportunity for someone who is interested in policy and knows the League to return to part-time work. If you are interested or know anyone who is interested in talking about the possibilities, please contact the League office.

New League report released


League representatives have been busy making presenta-

Conference presentations
MN Public Employee Labor Relations Association, Duluth
DTED's Economic Summit
University College Policy Conference
St. Paul Workforce Development Council
A Rural Perspective on the Labor Shortage, Fergus Falls
Twin Cities Area Labor Management Fall Conference
Dakota Co. Economic Development Partnership Annual Meeting
MN Economic Development Association Winter Conference

Briefing sessions
Marty Adams, Twin Cities Economic Development Group
Duane Benson, MN Business Partnership
Bill Blazar, MN Chamber
Bernie Brommer, AFL-CIO
Emmett Carson, Mpls Foundation
Ron Clark, Pioneer Press Editorial Board
Glenn Dorfman, Minnesota Association of Realtors
Larry Dowell, St. Paul Chamber
Tom Ebert, Employers Association

New stuff can be found regularly on the League's web site. For instance, you can find the League's new report, Help Wanted: More Opportunities Than People, on the front page. Also new to the site is a directory of regional civic organizations (RCOs) around the country and information about RCOs and how they operate. Check it out.

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