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We tended to look at Wisconsin or Iowa or an individual community as our competitors. But in today's global economy, the competition is just as likely to be in Ireland, Singapore, China, or India.

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Dividing up the political pie

Interest groups jockey for role in state's redistricting process

by J. Trout Lowen

Every 10 years, after results of national census are released, states get busy re-drawing the political landscapes. The process of redistricting—drawing new boundaries for congressional and state legislative districts—often becomes a highly contentious turf war between Democrats and Republicans. It's an opportunity for parties to see if they can stack the deck with enough voters per district to ensure their candidates get elected and their incumbents remain in office. Given Minnesota's highly independent Governor, redistricting has now become a three-for-all.

But politicians aren't the only interested parties weighing in on the redistricting debate. The federal Voting Rights Act requires any state redistricting plan ensure that the Constitutional rights of Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American voters are not infringed upon, at a minimum, and where possible improve opportunities for minority representation. Currently, the four minority groups make up about 12 percent of the state's population, but only about two percent of the State Legislature.

This year, officials from cities, suburbs, and urban areas are also expected to elbow into the debate, along side representatives from some of the state's major industries, such as agriculture, mining, and tourism. Both the Governor's plan and the Senate plan reflect some of the urban-suburban debate, and the population shift from city to suburb. Both plans increase the number of metro-area suburban representatives in Congress from 2 to 3.

The intent of redistricting is to equalize the

population in each district to within 2 percent, to protect the interests of minority communities, and produce districts that are compact, contiguous and take into consideration the needs of "communities of interest." This year, the idea of political competitiveness has also been added to the list of considerations. Census data shows the state voters are split nearly 50-50 between Democrats and Republicans. Redrawing the boundaries for the state's two Senate, eight congressional, and 201 state legislative districts is supposed to be the responsibility of state lawmakers. But often political differences make consensus impossible. Then the job of redistricts is falls to the courts.

Both the House and the Senate earlier this year released separate redistricting proposals. The Republican-controlled House plan would, for the first time in 100 years, create a single congressional district that includes Minneapolis and St. Paul. The Twin Cities suburbs would be represent by three members instead of two, and northern Minnesota would become a single district instead of two. The Senate plan, drawn up by Democrats, preserves separate districts for Minneapolis and St. Paul, and maintains the status quo by allocating four congressional seats to greater Minnesota and two to the suburbs.

In August, Gov. Jesse Ventura issued his plan for re-drawing congressional boundaries. A proposal for legislative districts is expected out soon. The Governor's congressional redistricting plan changes the balance of representation from what his essentially a 4-4 urban rural split in favor of greater metro-area representation. Under his proposal, the metro area would have five congressional representatives, one each for

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The Immigrant Experience in Minnesota: 'What's special about this place?'

Editor's note: This article is one in an occasional series of articles published by the Journal examining immigration and its impact on local communities. It is adapted from a longer paper prepared for George Latimer's Urban Studies class at Macalester College.

by Joel Wurl

How does one explain Minnesota in terms of its cultural composition and immigrant legacy? There is some pretty deep-seated imagery from popular culture, and it deserves a bit of critical attention. Native son Garrison Keillor has done more in the past two decades than anyone to draw attention to some of our state's trademark characteristics. Fictional Lake Wobegon, "the place where all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, and all the children are above average," is, foremost, a product of its immigrant roots. Keillor continues:

"What's special about this town; it's pretty much like a lot of towns, isn't it? There is a

perfectly good answer to that question; it only takes a moment to think of it. For one thing, the Statue of the Unknown Norwegian. If other towns have one, we don't know about it."

Keillor's other main subtitle for Lake Wobegon is "the town that time forgot." No wonder that a March 3, 1998 *Washington Post* article on Minnesota's changing social and political climate would include the following paragraph:

"With generous social welfare programs and bold civil rights positions, Minnesota and its homogeneous populace and liberal politicians once seemed — either naively or nobly — out of step with the rest of the nation. But for better or worse, Minnesota seems to be catching up with the rest of America. An influx of mostly poor blacks, Hmong, Laotians, and African refugees is reshaping the politics of this comfortable enclave that was a model for FDR's New Deal."

What does this really mean? Has

Minnesota been merely a quaint, sequestered, culturally arrested province that is only now experiencing the transformative effects of migration?

So, *what's special about this state? It's pretty much like a lot of states isn't it?* Well, it is a lot more like other states than most folks realize, but concluding that it is a microcosm of the American immigrant experience isn't near good enough. Minnesota's dominant ethnocultural makeup was shaped more in the mid-late 19th century than at any other time in its history. When Minnesota was granted U.S. territorial status in 1849, it was the dawning of a decade-long population influx unparalleled anywhere in the union. Railroad expansion, combined with the seizing of Indian lands, fueled a steady stream of new settlers from the eastern states and Canada, joined in massively increasing numbers by German, Scandinavian, British, and Irish immigrants. As the Civil War ended, others came from these same areas, along with Poles, Danes, and Czechs to continue cultivating large tracts of inexpensive land made available by the railroads and the government.

Not all of these immigrants set out to farm. The Twin Cities early on emerged as the center of commerce and manufacturing for the area, and by the first decade of the new century, counted over a half million residents, nearly 30 percent of whom were foreign born. Few cities in the country had a larger proportion of immigrants at that time. In Minneapolis, the dominant groups were Swedes and Norwegians; Germans and Irish in St. Paul.

The Iron Range areas to the north, attracted a significant number of South Slavs, Finns, Italians, Poles. The cities picked up a share of newcomers from these lands also, but as World War I curtailed the epic immigration flow, Minnesotans of Nordic "stock" still vastly outnumbered the rest. The "Statue of the Unknown Norwegian" stood taller than those of Columbus, Kosciuszko, Paul Bunyan, and Babe the Blue Ox.

There can be no denying that Minnesota remains a bastion of transplanted northern European cultures. One only has to look at the ancestry tables for the 1980 and 1990 census years. What difference has this really

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Viewpoint

From the Executive Director

Retooling the public service for new times

by Lyle Wray

It might seem like a funny time to be talking about retooling public service in Minnesota. Up to 28,000 members of two unions are staging the first strike of state employees since 1981. But with Minnesota's 1.3 million baby boomers edging toward retirement—the first boomers will turn age 65 in 2010—there is an increasingly urgent need to address several fundamental issues in the public service sector.

First, with as many as half of our public servants retiring, we need to be concerned about replacing those departing. A look into the future shows the supply pipeline for some professions, from nurses to teachers to civil engineers, is drying up. Occupations that were traditional career paths for women are hard hit now that there are many more choices available, and some of those occupations don't have enough new people to replace those departing. The first order of business is to develop state and local level spreadsheets identifying departing workers and recruiting targets for key professions, and then problem solve around important gaps.

Second, Minnesota needs to respond

now to future labor shortages by developing an aggressive and cohesive plan for improving the state's technology infrastructure. Despite the demise of the dot.com bubble, the use of technology is growing rapidly. Many industries are radically restructuring all aspects of their businesses—from design to manufacturing to distribution—using the Internet, and achieving substantial savings. For a variety

Third, the state needs to take steps to make public service an employer of choice. There are disturbing signs that a few decades of intense anti-government rhetoric, along with some of the usual antics of bureaucratic life, have combined to make public service careers less attractive. It is notable that more than two-thirds of the Kennedy School of Government graduates pursue careers in

the private sector. As government programs become increasingly complex, with greater reliance on information technology and more complex policy environments, we will pay the price if public service is the employer of last resort.

So what needs to be done? The Citizens League Board has selected the challenge of developing a smarter, leaner public service as the next study committee.

The task of retooling the public service is an important one for national, state and local governments. The committee will be asked to come up with a framework for thinking about key trends, and for identifying major policy options. Success will require a good deal more than tinkering with civil service and compensation issues. We need to question the nature and contours of the public service in the coming decade, investigate the use of technology, and develop strategies to recruit and retain the talent needed to serve the public in a very different era from the one for which our current governmental structures and public personnel management systems were designed. As we approach the major exodus in 2010, retooling the public service now should become a top priority. **MJ**

Lyle Wray is the executive director of the Minnesota Citizens League. He can be reached at (612) 338-0791.

of reasons, the public sector has often lagged behind in information technology investments. That needs to change. In order to deliver public services efficiently and conveniently to citizens and businesses, the public sector needs to move closer to a 24/7 way of doing business, using advanced technology to enable each public service worker to contribute the greatest possible value. One estimate suggests the use of information technologies will shrink the size of federal government by 25 percent over the next decade. The e-government trend, using information, computing and telecommunications technologies to dramatically improve public services is not a fad. A recent Brown University study on state government, which ranked Minnesota 33 out of 50 states in the use of the Web, should be a wake up call for a much more aggressive state posture on the use of advanced information technology.

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Minneapolis and St. Paul, and three suburban representatives. Greater Minnesota would be divided into a northern, a western, and a southern district.

"I'm not in the gambling business but let's face it, given our track record going back to 1913, the Legislature's record on enacting redistricting bills without court intervention is not very good."

The Governor's plan better represents the population distribution of the state, argues Joe Mansky, the governor's redistricting manager. "If you look of the census data, the data indicates that 58 percent of the state population lives in the 11 County metropolitan area, and on that basis their needs to be more representation for the metropolitan area," he adds.

Virtually no one involved in the redistricting process expects any of the three plans to garner the votes needed to become law. Instead, a five-judge panel appointed by state Supreme Court Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz will probably make the final decision.

"I'm not in the gambling business," Mansky admits, "but let's face it, given our track record going back to 1913, the Legislature's record on enacting redistricting bills without court intervention is not very good."

In anticipation of a political stalemate, the judges will begin to work on a plan in earnest this month. The deadline to put a redistricting plan into place, whether it's drafted by Legislature or by the courts, is March 19, 2002. Timing is critical, said Ann Higgins of the Minnesota League of Cities, since the state plan is just the beginning of a process that trickles down to counties and cities, and which can ultimately impact every elective office down to the school board and the park board.

Once the state's plan is in place, cities and counties must re-draw their own ward and precinct boundaries, then change all the voter registration records to reflect the new boundaries, enter the changes in the new statewide database, and notify voters. Most of the changes need to be completed in time for candidates to file for office in July 2002.

"It's a really big job, with no margin for error," Higgins says.

Timing may be a big concern for cities, but it is not the only concern. City officials are also interested in how lawmakers will slice and dice their communities

to serve their own political ends. Cities, Higgins said, want to be seen as communities of interest so their populations remain together in a single congressional district, or are split among the lease number of legislative districts.

"That is something that we believe is important to try to help communities work with the various levels of government up the chain," Higgins adds, "whether it's the counties, or the school districts, or, more directly with the Legislature and Congress, so that you're not represented by say, two different congressmen in the same city."

That's a situation Rochester Mayor Chuck Canfield is all too familiar with. Rochester is represented by seven different House members with districts that finger out across the southern portion of the state. Canfield said he thinks the city fell victim to political interests during the last redistricting process. He doesn't want it to happen again.

"I would like Rochester's districts to be geographically honest rather than have the center of Rochester have seven spokes going out as far as Redwing so that none of the seven house members has any true attachment to Rochester. I think it would work better if Rochester perhaps only had three or four districts," Canfield says.

The way it is now, some of the House members who represent portions of the city of Rochester represent districts that are largely rural. Rochester residents in those districts don't feel that their interests are being represented, Canfield says. A much more logical approach, he thinks, would be to divide Rochester in a way that reflects the city's own communities of interest. For example, the older parts of Rochester could be grouped into a house district with its older, more stable suburbs and small communities to the south. Another house district could represent the northwest quadrant of the city and suburban areas, which are experiencing rapid growth. "That would be nice logical groups of people that have communities of interests," Canfield adds.

The entire population of Olmstead County, Canfield points out, is enough to make up four house districts. According to the state demographer's office, the ideal congressional district should have a population of 614,935. The population is state House district should be 36,713, and a Senate district twice that size.

Canfield thinks his best hope of getting what he wants is with courts, where there will be less chance for political mischief.

Not everyone is happy about the prospect of court resolution. Mark Asch, president of Common Cause, said lawmakers are evading their responsibilities to develop a plan. If they cannot come up with a plan, they should appoint a non-partisan commission that can, he says.

"I think that to hand the job to the courts is an inappropriate use of the institution," Asch says. "If the Legislature and the Governor cannot come up with a plan working together, they should use their statutory authority and create an entity that can. There are a number of states that have done this. It works. It works well. But essentially, rather than working at a solution in the interests of the people, they have chosen to punt." **MJ**

J. Trout Lowen is the editor of the Minnesota Journal.

New challenges and new opportunities

by Rebecca Yanisch

As commissioner of the state's Department of Trade and Economic Development, I've been given the opportunity to participate in a great state plan, Governor Ventura's *Big Plan*. My main assignment involves six of the Big Plan initiatives, combined into one section called "Minnesota: World Competitor."

It's important to recognize that Minnesotans have not always thought of their state as a world competitor. We tended to look at Wisconsin or Iowa or an individual community as our competitors. But in today's global economy, the competition is just as likely to be in Ireland, Singapore, China, or India. We have to make Minnesota's employers and employees the best anywhere and be ready to compete effectively anywhere in the world. And to be competitive, we must focus on doing a few things very well.

First, we must have the best-educated and most highly trained workforce in the world because businesses choose to come here and expand here because of our productive workforce.

We're not a low-cost state. But we are a "high value" state. This means we have to continually challenge ourselves to improve the way we educate and prepare our workforce. How do we balance the traditional concept of a liberal education with the specific needs of well-paying employers who need technically trained workers? How do we focus our training activities in consideration of a long-term structural worker shortage? The governor and Legislature have recognized the need to reinvent our workforce development system and last session began the process of merging parts of the Department of Economic Security into DTED. This will be an exciting effort and will create new synergies between employer and employee services.

Second, we need to focus on exports. Our state economy has been growing in the 3 to 5 percent range. But to maintain this rate of growth we must increase exports of Minnesota's goods and services. We'll do this by assisting businesses with the export process and by opening up new markets overseas. Governor Ventura has helped tremendously, opening new doors worldwide and putting Minnesota on the international map. And this fall we'll make

our greatest trade mission ever to China, a huge potential export market for us.

Third, we need to make Minnesota a great place to grow businesses — and we must not be bashful about telling the world about it. This is no place for Minnesota's famed modesty. We have a great story to tell about our quality of life, our productive workforce, our reliable utility and transportation infrastructure, our educational institutions, lakes, and world-class entertainment.

Sometimes we hear people joke that Minnesota's business climate has improved — all the way from "hostile" to "neutral." But the joke sells us short. Recent events show real and tangible improvement in



"Minnesota: World Competitor"

the state's business climate. To cite just one example, the Legislature — spurred on by Governor Ventura — last session reformed our property tax system to reduce taxes for everyone from homeowners to renters to businesses. That's a story that we should tell.

Fourth, we need to look ahead to keep our economy vibrant. We have avoided some of the peaks and valleys of the national and international economy by having a diversified and advanced mix of businesses. We need to look ahead and sow the seeds today for tomorrow's state economic giants. Who will become the next Medtronic, 3M or General Mills?

We have a tremendous resource in our state's research institutions at the University of Minnesota, the Mayo Clinic, and in MNSCU. But frequently, the dis-

coveries made in the laboratory do not make it to the commercial marketplace. There is a gap between the inventive skills of our researchers and the requirements of our venture capital industry. In the last legislative session, the governor proposed and the Legislature approved a \$10 million appropriation for the Biomedical Innovation and Commercialization Initiative (BICI). BICI will become a for-profit, technology transfer corporation to turn our research discoveries into new companies, jobs, and health care benefits. We are currently raising an additional \$30 million from private sources. This type of activity takes time, patience, and involves some risk, but the long-term payoffs make this worthwhile and essential.

And finally, we must continue the great work we've done to promote tourism in Minnesota. As Governor Ventura has said, tourism is really about having fun. But for Minnesotans, it's also about the bottom line. Tourism brings new dollars into the statewide economy. It helps diversify the economy of all regions of the state. And, with Jesse "The Tourism Governor" Ventura leading the way, our Minnesota Office of Tourism must continue to leverage the governor's international celebrity and tell the world — including a significant number of potential entrepreneurs, investors and workers — about the attractions we have to offer.

As I look forward to these new challenges and new opportunities, I am reminded of one of the more enjoyable aspects of my job. Virtually every DTED program includes a local partner. All development occurs on the local level with state resources supporting, not leading, the local efforts. This gives me the opportunity to meet and work with a tremendous group of local leaders — mayors, bankers, entrepreneurs, workers, educators, and development professionals. Minnesota is blessed with a great cadre of leaders who make me very optimistic about our future economic success. **MJ**

Rebecca Yanisch is commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development.

OnBalance

Views From Around the State

The strike goes on even after the strike on the economy.

The **St. Cloud Times** (9/28) thinks now is not the right time for a strike. "...residents need a government that runs as efficiently and smoothly as possible so they can focus on other things, namely the war against terrorism. Remember, unlike a private-sector strike, in which a company's revenues may be impacted almost immediately, the state will continue to collect the revenue — your taxes — it uses to pay these striking workers. Yet those services likely won't be provided, at least at normal levels, with 28,000 'front-line' state workers off the job."

"Union leaders say Gov. Jesse Ventura needs to take responsibility for the strike because in 1993, both unions agreed to take a zero across-the-board wage increase when the state's budget took a nose dive. They accepted the freeze, they say, on the promise that the state would do right by workers when the economy turned upward. We can't speak to what transpired then, but it's unreasonable and impractical to hold the current administration to pledges made nearly a decade ago," the **Red Wing Republican Eagle** (10/3) argues. "Circumstances change; the players are different...should the strike become prolonged, union leaders should be savvy enough to realize that they are unlikely to win in the court of public opinion with the existing economic environment. The best path is for both sides to get back to the bargaining table and bring a quick resolution to the strike."

In response to Gov. Ventura's statement that he must "stay within the budget passed by the Legislature," the **Mankato Free Press** (10/3) thinks, "What the governor is really saying is that employees must accept whatever he and the Legislature approved. If that is the case, then the governor must be opposed to labor negotiations or workers' ability to organize. If employees must take what the Legislature and Ventura approved, there is no such thing as negotiation. There would, in fact, be no place for any unions."

If they can't negotiate salary contracts beyond the minimal amount passed by the Legislature and Governor, then why would they need to exist?"

The **Fergus Falls Daily Journal** (10/2) speculates the strike could have been avoided. "...state officials are right in their concern of providing wage increases the state can't afford if the economy goes sour. On the other hand, state workers in recent years have essentially seen cost-of-living increases eaten away by rising health insurance costs, and want to ensure their salary raises truly reflect the cost-of-living increases in the future. However, considering the two sides are \$140 million apart on a nearly \$3 billion payroll, it seems likely the difference could have been hammered out without a strike."

The **Rochester Post-Bulletin** (10/2) thinks the strike relates back to the tax rebate. "Julien Carter, state commissioner of employee relations, is quoted in the **Star Tribune** of Minneapolis as saying, 'The state is facing its first revenue shortfall in over a decade. In addition, the number of layoffs in the airline, travel and hospitality industries continues to mount, meaning that thousands of Minnesotans face diminished income this year. Yet the union leaders have chosen not to accept the state's offer.' He neglected to mention that one of the reasons the state is facing a shortfall is that the state, encouraged by Ventura, approved a \$791.3 million tax rebate. If the rebate had been more modest, there would have been funds available to finance a somewhat more generous offer and avoid the strike."

Costs are too high! Minnesotans prepare to revolt because of premiums.

"A number of reasons have been cited for the relentless upward trend in costs [of health care]. One is the continued increase in the cost of prescription drugs, which went up 21 percent per year in Minnesota from 1998 through 2000."

Administrative costs for health insurance companies also increased 8 percent per year in the same period," reports the **Rochester Post Bulletin** (9/26). "There is no question that new thinking and new policies are required. If health care premiums continue to rise at 12 percent per year, many more businesses and consumers will be priced out of the market."

The **Duluth News Tribune** (9/6) fears the double whammy of an economic downturn and expensive health care. "Even at a time of strong economic growth, employees will want to see some return in better salaries — not have their share in company prosperity be eaten up in health care premiums. But at a time of economic slowdown, the pressure as profits diminish will be to reduce benefits or to shift more of the cost of health care to workers.... Despite inevitable controversy, we need a new discussion on how to contain health care costs at the state and national levels. Without commitment to such a discussion, we can expect skyrocketing health insurance premiums to make health care increasingly unaffordable for employers and workers alike."

The **Bemidji Pioneer** (9/9) is upset about the lack of a solution to the rising health care costs. "There has been much discussion at the state and national level about rising health care costs, but little has been done to contain them. It is important that health care coverage remain affordable for Minnesotans, especially the 500,000 who receive their coverage through small employer groups and the 200,000 who have private insurance coverage of their own outside of a group. The Ventura administration is seeking solutions, which could range from providing more competition to more regulation, or a mix of both. The issue needs to be put on both the state and national priority list now — before higher co-payments, co-insurance and deductibles put health coverage out of reach for many Minnesotans." **MJ**

Immigration *continued from page 2*

made in the state's historical development? How has this shaped the area's cultural, political, civic, and moral character? Historian Kathleen Neils Conzen addresses these questions through her study of the dominant German Catholic community of Stearns County. Conzen observes a dynamic process of social adaptation that she labels "localization," which she describes as the tendency of an immigrant-constructed culture to reproduce itself in the educational institutions, political and governmental organizations, business, media, and popular culture of the broader local community. Consequently, what are initially ethnic group values come to play a strong role in determining the local "rules of the game," in molding "the way we do things here."

For Conzen, the most fertile venue for understanding the lasting consequences of immigration isn't the inner workings of the immigrant group, it's the mainstream. The entire ethos of Stearns County, she argues, is a manifestation of its immigrant legacy. As she puts it:

"The local culture of thrift and non-ostentation, the local standards by which politics were practiced, and honor and status accorded the individual were initially molded in a German ethnic matrix, but quickly overflowed its bounds to define the county's values."

While Conzen points out that this is not the only model of cultural construction, her conclusions offer an important reminder that in assessing the aftermath of immigration, there may well be outcomes other than absorption into the established society, on the one hand, or heroic retention of old world systems and group consciousness, on the other — there is also the scenario where the immigrant culture not only affects but ultimately *determines* that of the locality it joins. So how applicable is this to Minnesota more generally? This is a pivotal question that has yet to be answered.

The enduring significance of early migration patterns is central to understanding Minnesota's cultural character, but it is by no means the whole story. The state's population has also undergone some perceptible changes of late, due in large part to immigration. A recent study of population changes during the 1990s suggests that Minnesota was among states with the highest rate of increase in foreign-born residents during that decade. This

finding actually reflects a pattern that reaches back to the early 1980s.

An important window on these changes is the ongoing statistical representation of the state's "minority" populations. The year 2000 marked the inauguration of double-digit percentages for the state's minority segment (11.2 percent), up from 3.9 percent in 1980 and 6.3 percent in 1990. This rate of change is almost unsurpassed in the U.S. The most dramatic upswings since 1980 are to be found in the state's Asian and Latino communities. The 2000 Census figures for the Latino population, Minnesota's fastest growing cultural group, far exceeded projections from the late-1990s, a phenomenon repeated in many other states across the country. Minnesota's increasing Asian, Latino, and (to a lesser extent) African American communities are, indeed, a consequence of immigration, though not necessarily a direct one. A very large number of Minnesota immigrants have come here as secondary migrations from other states like Texas (Latinos) and California (Hmong).

Minnesota's immigrant experience differs also in that the state is one of the nation's primary destinations for *refugees*. Over the past decade, Minnesota has typically ranked among the top 10 in refugee resettlement numbers. This is not an anomaly; since the end of the Vietnam War, tens of thousands of refugees, most Southeast Asians, have called Minnesota home. In more recent years, others have come from Europe, Central America, and particularly from Africa. It still surprises many to learn that St. Paul's Hmong community of perhaps as many as 35,000 is regarded as the largest in U.S., while over half of the nation's Somalis live in Minnesota, upwards to 25,000 in all.

"Why here?" is the natural reaction. The answer isn't simple and would make for a formidable research project in and of itself, beginning with a close look at the antecedents of Minnesota's most recent encounter with refugees. In particular, it would be important to go back to the immediate aftermath of World War II, when Minnesota was a prominent supporter of the nation's decision to open its doors part way to those millions displaced by the war. It was one of the first states to establish a Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons to lobby on behalf of supportive legislation. Minnesota organizations, particularly extensions of the



"...What difference does it make what his name was...he was just a darn good Norwegian!"

Lutheran, Catholic, and Methodist churches, exercised important leadership in sponsoring and resettling refugees, and an important precedent was established.

But economic opportunity and kinship ties, more than humane intercession, brought the most immigrants to Minnesota. And this is especially evident in the latest notable trend. A large share of Minnesota's newcomers are settling once again in the hinterlands, however, these transplants aren't seeking land. They come for low-wage jobs in the pork and poultry processing factories of towns like Worthington, Willmar, Marshall, and Madelia. Also unlike the earlier migration epoch, these newcomers are not from northern and western Europe. They are an amalgam of Laotians, Hmong, Somalis, and, most numerous, Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

Worthington, a town of about 10,000 people, has gone from just .2 percent minority composition in 1980 to over 22 percent in 1995. One civic leader there commented recently that "the town that people who have lived here all their lives remember is gone; it no longer exists." In some of the locales, the new immigration has been welcomed as a desperately needed remedy to a declining economy, while in others, the attendant social complexity is something that established residents have felt they did not ask for. Meanwhile, one has to wonder if the companies that have produced this condition have adequately accepted responsibility for assisting the communities in addressing the consequences. What is certain is that the cultural character of Lake Wobegon is in a state of momentous transition. **MJ**

Joel Wurl is Curator and Assistant Director of the University of Minnesota's Immigration History Research Center.

TakeNote

Policy Tidbits

Unimportant things to help take your mind off other more important things.

It seems that with all the big lottery prizes offered over the past years that the state's lottery revenue would be growing. However, in many states the piece of the lottery pie is decreasing — rapidly. Lottery profits grew only .9 percent in Minnesota between 1999 and 2000. Around the Midwest, Iowa, Nebraska and Wisconsin all saw profits decline -2.3, -9.1 and -18.5 percent, respectively. South Dakota was the big winner. Profits there rose 3.4 percent. —*Scott McMahon.*

Maybe one of the reasons our national discussion about Social Security is so confused, and so confusing, is the way we always seem to talk about “funding” things when we talk about paying for public services. We talk about school districts being “funded;” or transit being “funded.” And then we run into this notion of Social Security’s “trust fund.”

Technically speaking, to “fund” something is to set aside a large enough sum of money so that the activity in question can have its annual costs covered by the interest from that accumulated principal. It’s in this sense that we talk about private-employer pensions, for example, being “funded.” Activities that are simply paid for every year — that just get an annual appropriation — are not “funded.” Schools, for example, are not literally “funded.” Most services aren’t “funded.” They’re “financed.”

And as economists have been pointing out Social Security really isn’t “funded,” either. The payments that come in are spent for benefits; the (for the moment) surplus is spent on other things. The argument is about what other things. —*Ted Kolderie.*

Health-care costs are now back to double-digit annual increases after having fallen in the mid-’90s. There are a variety of reasons for this; among them, surely, is our desire — reinforced by their doctors and elected representatives — not to be denied any service or procedure available that might conceivably be helpful.

Again and again we see the truth of Anne and Herman Somers’ description in the mid-1970s of American health care; as (the only) system in which “reimbursement is guaranteed for costs that are neither controlled by competition nor regulated by public authority and in which no incentive for economy can be discerned.” Clearly such a system cannot continue very long.

Minnesota used to be good at thinking how to deal successfully with this problem. Unfortunately it isn’t, any more. Health care has become another good-guys/bad-guys debate. —*T.K.*

While filling out the required annual statement of ownership for the *Journal*, we consulted last year’s statement, which was included in the On Balance section. That entire section was filled with editorial speculation and opinion on the fate of Governor Ventura’s proposal to change the financing structure for public schools and reform the property tax. While “intriguing, challenging and interesting” all show up several times, the editorial writers were split on whether it was a good idea. But there was almost universal opinion that such a “radical” idea might not get anywhere any time soon. Must be why they’re editorial writers and not odds makers. —*Phil Jenni.*

Out of this world. Efforts to extend the tax base in Los Angeles reached new heights when the Los Angeles County Assessor tried to tax eight satellites hovering 22,000 miles above the earth. The satellites are owned by Hughes Electronics, which is based in Los Angeles County, and are not being taxed by any other jurisdiction. The effort was blocked. Meanwhile, public hearings are scheduled to come up with the right way to say that satellites have no tax status in California. And people accuse Los Angelenos of being spacey. —*P.J.*

Minnesota goes international! While speaking at a recent Citizens League Mind-Opener breakfast, Vance Opperman reported that Minnesota ranks seventh among states for international trade. Sixty-five percent of

the state’s trade is agricultural based, and 70 percent is trade with Canada. —*S. M.*

Flexcar — a Seattle initiative allowing individuals to “check out” a car for a block of time — is gaining momentum. There are currently 1,300 members using the 42-vehicle fleet. There are other similar programs in Portland and Boston. But the next big thing may be station cars — a fleet of cars available at major transit terminals for people to use to get to and from the hub. Will a program like this help encourage the use of public transportation? We’ll just have to wait and see. —*S.M.*

At a recent Citizens League meeting

Randy Johnson opened things on a seriously gloomy note. “I think we all know the downside of living in the Twin Cities region. We start with the weather, over which we can do nothing. This is not a place that has great unique natural beauty. We have no oceans. It’s about the dullest place the Mississippi runs throughout its course.”

But one thing we do have is a hub airport. Although at certain times and weaker moments many of us may complain about our local airline, we should take a moment to count the many benefits of our hub. As Vance Opperman pointed out at the same meeting, one-third of metropolitan jobs — a payroll of \$2.3 billion — are affected by the airport hub, 40,000 jobs are directly tied to the hub, and a recent study estimates that the presence of a hub airport contributes 12,000 additional high tech jobs to a region. —*Michael Raja.*

“Take Note” contributors include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members.

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

PERIODICALS
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MINNESOTA

Welcome**New and returning members**

Gary Barnes
 Steve Corneli
 Sally and Leigh
 Countryman
 Andy Currie
 Rebecca Hooper
 B. Todd Jones
 Bernadine Joselyn
 Bridget Kane
 Rick Lancaster
 Ann Markusen
 Greg Oxley
 ly Pofert
 Christian Rummelhoff
 Anders Rydaker
 David Schaaf
 Ann Seha

League Board sets policy agenda for future

The Citizens League Board of Directors selected two new projects at its meeting on September 28. The first project is a short term study committee to help frame the questions for a broader look at reforming the public service system. The second project grew out of earlier discussions about how best to recognize and celebrate the League during the upcoming 50th anniversary of the League's founding.

The Board selected the public service topic from a menu of possibilities developed by a program selection committee co-chaired by **John Adams** and **Missy Thompson**. Other short term studies considered by the Board included an examination of water supply and quality in the metropolitan area and rethinking the structure of high school.

The 50th Anniversary Project

The Board approved the creation of a "blue ribbon" task force to reflect on the Citizens League's contribution to the community in the past 50 years and then sketch out important big ideas for Minnesota in the next ten years.

The task force is expected to celebrate the League's unique contribution to policy-making in Minnesota the last half-century. But it must also look ahead, at least for the next ten years, and ask how the League can continue to make a difference.

Setting the stage for the next ten years could include coming up with the "big idea" for areas in which the League has historically contributed such as: the economy, K-12 education, post-secondary education, energy and the environment, government and election reform, health and human services, metropolitan governance including development and housing, public service delivery, public works infrastructure, taxation and public finance, and transportation.

An overarching theme would relate to what is demanded of corporate and individual citizens for our state's future and how we can move forward on an active citizenship agenda.

The Board also recommended that the project conclude with a permanent outcome.

A Smarter, Leaner Public Service

The recent strike by some State employees has focused attention on the public service system. But lost in the immediacy of the current issue is the broader question of whether the existing public service system can attract the people and deliver the outcomes required in today's world.

Dramatic changes in demographics, service and budget expectations of the public and in the nature of work in the private sector are creating enormous strain on the public service system.

Up to half of the state and local government employees are eligible to retire in the next decade. But the "career pipelines" are not being filled. Only a third of the graduates of public administration schools actually go to work in government. There are many barriers to having public service viewed as an "employer of choice" by talented employees.

There is also a demand that public services provide better and quicker services to the public, businesses and other governments. Typically this has required the use of advanced information technology and redesign of services. There are significant barriers to redesign of services including statutory limits and multiple jurisdictions. Support for advanced information technology has been a challenge in the public service arena generally.

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CITIZENS LEAGUE

708 South 3rd St. Suite 500
 Minneapolis, MN 55415
 612-338-0791 Fax 612-337-5919
www.citizensleague.net

The Citizens League promotes the public interest in Minnesota by involving citizens in identifying and framing critical public policy choices, forging recommendations and advocating their adoption.

The Citizens League is an open membership organization. Suggested dues are \$50 for individuals and \$75 for families. For more information, please call 612-338-0791.

Looking back to our future

In designing the new anniversary project, the Board suggested that the process could be similar to that which preceded the League's seminal "Issues of the 80s" report.

Chaired by **David Graven**, the Committee on the Issues of the 80s, made up largely of League veterans, looked back at the League's contribution, but then determined what policy issues were most likely to emerge in the coming decade. The report then provided an intellectual framework for thinking about emerging issues. It focused particularly on incentives, choice, competition and decentralization as means for improving systems for delivery of public services.

The Issues of the 80s report had an extraordinary impact on the League and on public policy in Minnesota. More than half of League studies during the decade reviewed the delivery of public services within the incentive-based system approach. In addition, most of the League leadership during the decade - board members, committee chairs and presidents - had been members of the 80s committee.

League recommendations were successfully implemented in many service areas, including health care, solid waste, and most notably, education. The most significant report of the 1980s recommended that parents and their children be given the right to choose which K-12 school they attend. By the end of the decade Minnesota's choice programs, including the concept of charter schools developed by a committee led by **John Rollwagen**, had become a national model for education reform. Many League observers point to the League's education reform efforts as its most significant achievement.

The 50th Anniversary Project *(continued)*

For instance, the League could develop a local award for Minnesota policy innovations, modeled after the Harvard/Ford Foundation national awards.

In developing some permanent reminder of the League, the Board suggested that any such outcome be highly visible, recurring and self-sustaining, connected to important target audiences and relevant to the League's past and future accomplishments.

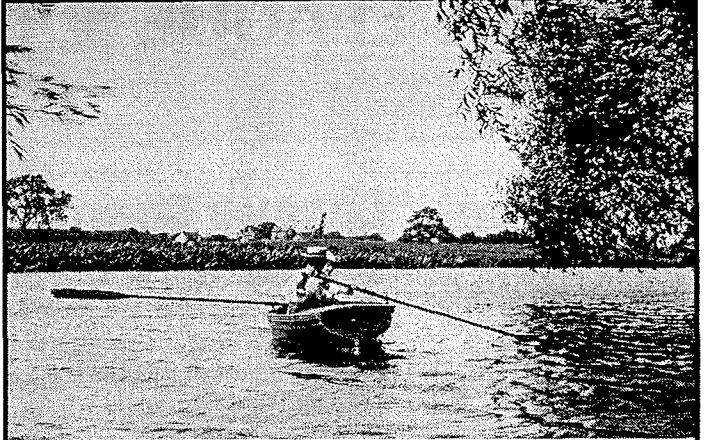
The Board and staff will spend the fall developing the proposal in anticipation of a launch sometime after the first of the year.

A Smarter, Leaner Public Service *(continued)*

This study committee is not designed to solve the problem at this time. Rather its task is to frame the issues to be addressed in Minnesota. For instance, what are the key questions and major areas of policy development to respond to these multiple challenges? If public service is to be competitive and be an employer of choice, what steps are needed in public service reform? What agenda should state and local governments pursue to respond to these challenges?

Please watch your mail for the sign-up materials.

MIND-OPENER POLICY FORUM



Water, Water, Everywhere?

Minnesota is famous as the land of sky blue waters. The Twin Cities region shares in that bounty. Its lakes and rivers are often cited as one of the region's principal assets that make this a desirable place to live. From lakes to ponds and rivers to streams, our region has an abundance of water resources. But are we taking this resource for granted? Join us as the next Mind-Opener series examines the role of water in the Twin Cities.

Tuesday, November 13, 2001

Gary Oberts

Senior Planner, Environmental Services
Metropolitan Council



Tuesday, November 20, 2001

Lance Neckar

Professor, Landscape Architecture
University of Minnesota



Tuesday, November 27, 2001

Kent Lokkesmoe

Director, Water Resources
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources



Tuesday, December 4, 2001

Nelson French

Director
Friends of the Minnesota Valley

7:30-8:30 a.m.

\$10 members; \$15 non-members
(includes a continental breakfast)

The Nicollet Island Inn
95 Merriam, Minneapolis

Ample free parking is available