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North Dakota Intelligencer: July 27, 1992

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Grand Forks Herald

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The
North
Dakota

Intelligencer

An inside report on people, politics & power



Volume 1

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Number 9

Burdick's recent health troubles

Here is a list of Burdick's recent health problems that have been made public:

■ **Dec. 7, 1987.** Slips on ice and hits head at airport in Fargo. Suffers concussion, spends four days in a Fargo hospital.

■ **July 28, 1988.** Colonoscopy performed; three polyps removed. Informed about cancerous polyp on Aug. 12. Major surgery performed to remove 18 inches of his colon on Aug. 25, the day the public is informed about his condition.

■ **Nov. 27, 1988.** Just weeks after re-election, rushed to a Fargo hospital after suffering seizures. Placed in intensive care. Scan reveals evidence of "small vessel disease." Released from hospital Dec. 9.

■ **March 7, 1989.** Burdick hospitalized for two days at Bethesda Naval Hospital for tests after he complains of not feeling well. Calls the illness "goofy" and said it was an adverse reaction to anti-seizure medication he had been taking.

■ **Dec. 28, 1989.** Appears on TV wearing a round bandage over what he described as an "abrasion" on his temple. Says he's not sure what caused it and that he had probably made it worse by scratching it. Says he had the abrasion examined by a doctor.

■ **Nov. 7, 1991.** Taken by ambulance to Walter Reed Hospital in Bethesda, Md., after complaining to the Capitol physician's office about feeling flush and not well. Spends the night at the hospital.

■ **July 13, 1992.** Enters Fargo hospital after complaining of chest pain and fatigue. In a July 21 press release from his office, an unnamed doctor is quoted as saying that Burdick did not suffer a stroke or a heart attack.

The trouble with Quentin

Burdick's uncertain health raises questions about his ability to serve

Something unspoken looms over North Dakota politics in this summer of surprises.

Quentin Burdick is sick again.

Burdick spent more than a week in a Fargo hospital — amid almost complete secrecy about his condition or his prognosis.

Now 84 years old, Burdick has been in the U.S. Senate for 32 years. He chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee and the subcommittee on agricultural appropriations. From these positions, Burdick has salted away pork for North Dakota, ranging from new buildings on university campuses to new bridges on rural roads. Several of his projects were among spending items embargoed by President Bush, and the president singled out for special ridicule a grant for a museum about the history and culture of German immigrants from Russia.

The hospitalization raised new questions about Burdick's fitness for office. If Burdick were to leave office, North Dakotans face the prospect of choosing two senators in a single year: if he does not leave office, the Senate faces the prospect of dealing with an aged, infirm and potentially incompetent committee chairman.

Earlier this year, House members tried to strip Rep. **Jamie Whitten** of Mississippi of his chairmanship of the Appropriations Committee. Whitten also chairs the subcommittee on rural development, agriculture and related agencies — the House counterpart of Burdick's own agriculture appropriations subcommittee. A compromise was worked out allowing

Whitten to keep the title, but passing day-to-day operation of the committee to its second-ranking member, Rep. **William Natcher** of Kentucky.

Burdick's health has been an issue for more than a decade. **Gene Knorr** raised it in the 1982 Senate campaign; **Earl Strinden** made it a central theme of his campaign against Burdick in 1988.

The secrecy about Burdick's hospital stay apparently was ordered by

Jocelyn Burdick, the senator's wife. She has two motives, one to protect Burdick himself, the second to remain faithful to her religious beliefs. Jocelyn Burdick is a Christian Scientist.

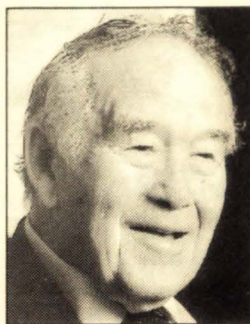
The secrecy about Quentin Burdick's health brought a chorus of newspaper editorials demanding more information. The Bismarck Tribune headlined, "No reason to keep

tight lip on Burdick." The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead said, "Sen. Burdick breaks faith with his state." The Grand Forks Herald suggested that Burdick should resign, allowing North Dakotans to elect a successor in November. The Forum called that suggestion "premature."

North Dakota law requires an election to fill a Senate vacancy. There is some ambiguity, but the law appears to allow 90 days from the day the vacancy occurs until the election is held.

The governor could appoint a temporary replacement who would serve no more than 90 days.

Burdick's term expires in 1994. The Intelligencer reported the wrong year in the July 13 issue.



Quentin Burdick

Conspiracy on the fringe of N.D. politics

James "Bo" Gritz — rhymes with rights — is running for president on the America First Coalition ticket, arguing for Christian patriotism, the abolishment of the Federal Reserve and other favorite issues of the rightist fringe.

While some white supremacist groups praise his candidacy, the retired Special Forces lieutenant colonel takes pains to condemn bigotry and racism. (The decorated Vietnam vet has Amerasian children.)

Not everyone identified with North Dakota's political fringe was there, but the audience of 150 at a Gritz platform rally in Mandan on July 19 did provide an interesting assortment of people outside the mainstream. Despite their extremism, several activists manage to attract attention through the state's initiative laws. Push an initiative, get your name in the media, and your cause is advanced even if it doesn't make the ballot.

Karen Meyer attended the Gritz rally. She's a Solen farmwife and sponsor of two initiatives unlikely to appear in the fall election. One would establish a statewide investigative body to look into claims of government corruption. The other would revamp the jury system, forbidding voir dire and allowing jurors to question witnesses and overturn laws. The proposals reflect traditional thought of the Posse Comitatus, which opposes government beyond the county sheriff level.

Debra Biffert of Halliday wasn't at

Outside the norm

the rally but she belongs to Meyer's sponsoring committee and led the successful 1989 referral of the statewide comprehensive health guidelines.

Robert and Daisy Mae Salsman of Fargo also are listed as members of Meyer's team. They were convicted in 1988 on tax evasion and fraud charges along with **Reuben Larson**, now in jail for shooting District Judge **Lawrence Jahnke** of Grand Forks.

The evening before the shooting, Larson was distributing materials produced by **Len Martin** of Mandan, now a candidate for superintendent of public instruction. Martin, who addressed the Gritz rally, denounced an instructional program, "America 2000," which he says will inject godless values into the school system. His publications also revile the health guidelines.

The author of books about various conspiracies, Martin was a friend of **Gordon Kahl** and formerly wrote for "The Spotlight," the anti-Semitic tabloid published in Washington, D.C.

Ron Stuart, the "Scottish Sage" of Jamestown who is Martin's campaign chairman, also attended. Following the Jahnke shooting, Stuart wrote letters to various newspapers defending Larson as a man driven to desperation by judicial tyranny.

Certainly not everyone at the Gritz hearing could be considered fringe. **Christy Zentz** attended. A Bismarck mother of many, she testifies for traditional Christian values and against abortion at legislative hearings.

The defining factor in assessing fringedom is a paranoid conspiratorialism: Do the radicals think there's some overwhelming plot to destroy society or establish one-world government. **Marlys Stein** of Bismarck, a sponsor of an anti-abortion initiative, but she doesn't sound like a conspiratorialist, even though she wrote a letter to the Forum defending Martin as an honorable Christian.

On the other hand, Stein, who was not at the rally, did say nice things about **Lyndon Larouche** a few elections ago. Larouche's backers have an odd variety of conspiracy theories.

Retired Minot physician **Russell Odegard** wasn't at the rally but he's identified with the fringe. He's not a conspiratorialist, although his anti-government initiatives would drastically reshape North Dakota. However, his falling out from the **Kent French** referral team of 1989 resulted because some referralistas thought him too odd.

Normen Grubb of Minot, not at the rally, might be considered another member of the fringe. Grubb, who failed in his bid to refer Sunday shopping, always complained about the media working in league with big business to push Sunday shopping, but his conspiratorialism never really sounded paranoid.

Gore, coal and taxes; Campaign '92; Guy's nemesis

Gore and the carbon tax

Sen. **Al Gore's** selection as vice presidential nominee could cost Clinton votes in North Dakota. Gore is a proponent of a carbon tax administered by an international regulatory agency to discourage the production of carbon dioxide. The Democratic platform calls on limits on the production of carbon dioxide.

That position worries energy companies and alarm could very well spread to their employees — who otherwise might lean toward the Democrats. A carbon tax particularly worries the lignite industry because lignite coal has a low heat content per unit of weight. You must burn more of it to produce the same amount of energy. More coal burned means more carbon dioxide produced — and more tax due.

John Dwyer, president of the North Dakota Lignite Council, warns that a carbon tax would spell the death of his industry. "It's very inequitable for the energy-producing states as compared to the energy-consuming states," he observed.

The oil industry is upset, as well.

Pressed on the issue, Sinner couldn't offer a strong defense of Gore or the platform plank. "I think you will see any imposition of such tax will be tempered by time," Sinner aid.

Energy Secretary **James Watkins**, visiting Bismarck, failed to pounce on the issue. Only after a reporter asked

Hall talk

did he criticize Gore on the issue, and then only mildly.

The Republican North

Clinton's chances in North Dakota aren't good anyway. It's been a long time since anyone made money betting on the Democratic presidential ticket in North Dakota. **Lyn-don Johnson** carried the state in 1964. In 1988, **Michael Dukakis** managed 44 percent — respectable for a Democrat, and just about what Kennedy got in 1960 and Humphrey drew in 1968. The biggest losing share since World War II was **Jimmy Carter's** 48.1 percent in 1976. The smallest was **Adlai Stevenson's** 29 percent in 1952.

Slippage from Schafer

Republican gubernatorial candidate **Ed Schafer** has slipped in handling of some questions. After Gov. **George Sinner** announced the \$4.3 million in budget allotments, Schafer sharply criticized WEFA, the state's forecasting firm from Pennsylvania.

It doesn't make sense to have a firm so far from North Dakota assessing the state's economy, he told one re-

Hall talk: See Page 3A

Hall talk

porter. After realizing WEFA's December predictions of revenue shortfalls were close to the mark, Schafer chastised Sinner for not relying on their professional expertise.

Schafer also was fuzzy in a Capitol news conference when he called for a hiring and firing freeze for classified state employees. He failed to stress that a freeze alone would not solve the projected \$150 million revenue shortfall for 1993-95. It's only part of the puzzle, he said later, but early news accounts lacked that emphasis.

To his political credit, Schafer used opponent Nick Spaeth's absence at the national attorney general's conference and the Democratic convention to seize the headlines with the hiring freeze pledge.

Bad timing

Republican Senate candidate **Steve Sydness** is having a tough time scheduling news conferences reporters are willing to attend. That's significant because the less money you have, the more important free media becomes.

Sydness proposed a jobs initiative on the same day that trials started challenging the state's school finance and legislative redistricting. The Legislative Council's Budget Section also met that day and committed news.

All of these events were scheduled in advance.

Sydness called a news conference on short notice to claim distortions in Rep. **Byron Dorgan's** TV ads. The date: July 16 — the same day that Gov. **Bill Clinton** was to accept the Democratic presidential nomination and the day that **Ross Perot** dropped out of the race.

None of these is major miscue, but it's the mark of a successful campaign to avoid making too many of them.

Missed cue

The Democrat's media machine worked well in getting news — manufactured and otherwise — back to North Dakota from the national convention in New York. Gov. **George Sinner** appeared on local TV stations for individual interviews via satellite feed, and he called Bismarck to talk to print and radio reporters via a speaker phone. In all cases, his comments received wide coverage.

On the other hand, NBC television failed to flash an electronic label of Sinner's name on the screen when he announced the state's vote, leaving him as the only unidentified governor in the crowd.

The national GOP connection

Within two months, North Dakota has had visits from GOP Chairman **Rich Bond**, Energy Secretary **James Watkins** and **Marilyn Quayle**. That's a pretty good turnout of big-name Republicans in one stretch. How does this state deserve that?

Republicans in Washington apparently think **Steve Sydness** has a shot for the Senate seat, so they're willing to help. Sydness and Watkins spent some time together, and Sydness introduced him to the media.

But the national party also is making up for some past snafus, the most striking of which was Ag Secretary **Ed Madigan's** trip to Bismarck last year. During confirmation hearings Sen. **Kent Conrad** made Madigan promise to visit a farm, so Madigan was stuck. Conrad and Dorgan used his presence for tremendous political gain, with Dorgan giving a fine "fighting for the farmer" speech.

Even going back to President **George Bush's** centennial visit in 1989, Democrats have been skilled in taking advantage of national Republican personalities. Gov. **George Sinner's** office announced Bush's visit, for example, not the GOP.

Though Democrats here may revile his tactics and old-line Republican conservatives resent the changing of the guard, state GOP Chairman **Kevin Cramer** is held in high regard in D.C. (Bond praised him as the best and brightest state party head.) Cramer has no doubt squawked about those gaffes, and party leaders have listened.

Bill Guy's nemesis returns

Into the turbulent political climate of 1992 steps — **Charles Perry**, wrecker of dreams.

Perry is the man who managed **Jim Jungroth's** 1974 campaign for the U.S. Senate. Jungroth had been a Democratic Party activist and his campaign against energy development drew 6,679 votes — enough to re-elect Sen. **Milton Young** and spoil former Gov. **William Guy's** dreams of the Senate. Young's margin in his last campaign was 177 votes.

This year, Perry is backing another independent Senate candidate, Carson area rancher **Tom Asbridge**. Asbridge is expected to announce for the Senate by the end of July.

Perry's checkered political past includes stints at the Democratic National Committee and the North Dakota Tax Department. He organized The United Plainsmen, an anti-development group, and drifted from a Morton County farm into activist politics. Most recently, he was involved in efforts to get presidential candidate **Ross Perot** on Florida's election ballot.

Enter the Progressive Coalition

A group calling itself the Progressive Coalition wants to push political debate in this year's gubernatorial election to the left, raising issues such as universal health care, family leave and day care, alternative energy sources and matters important to Native Americans.

Don Morrison, a Tax Department analyst and former Peace Coalition president, is chairman of the gender-balanced steering committee. Other members include Sen. **Joe Satrom**, D-Bismarck; **David Kemnitz**, president of the AFL-CIO; and abortion rights activist **Carol Gass**. **Tracy Potter**, assistant tourism director and Gov. **George Sinner's** transition chairman, attended the press conference. All backed Sen. **William Heigaard** for governor.

Running an independent candidate for governor is a possibility, Morrison said, but he and the others repeatedly emphasized the issues. They want the issues addressed. The issues are important.

The dilemma they face is this: Without a candidate to embody and advocate the issues, this Progressive Coalition becomes just another interest group. Labor and abortion rights groups add clout and numbers, but **Ed Schafer** and **Nick Spaeth** have no particular reason to pay more attention to the coalition than, say, the Realtors Association.

Attendance at an August 8 "Summit Conference of Progressive Leaders" in Carrington will be key to their success. The meeting room at the Chieftain Inn holds 80. A big crowd is needed.

The telephone campaign

Eight Democratic candidates for statewide office already have quarters in the Capitol. Just out of curiosity, we checked on how their offices answer the phones:

Telephone answerers at seven of the eight announced the office or department: "State Treasurer," or "Securities Commission," for example.

The exception was "Insurance Commissioner (**Earl Pomeroy's** office." Even answering calls to the Fire and Tornado Fund, the person names his boss — "Insurance Commissioner Pomeroy's office" — before saying his own name.

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The business beat

Are tax breaks really big incentives for businesses?

Certain tax breaks and financial incentives are touted when North Dakota woos new business, but around the country and in Canada, many lawmakers doubt the approach's value.

Ontario even forbids provincial and municipal tax incentives as economic development plans, as attendees at this month's Midwestern Legislative Conference annual meeting in Bismarck learned.

"As far as I'm concerned, tax incentives and tax treaties — somebody has to pay for it and it usually comes down to the people of the province," says **Derek Fletcher**, a member of the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"They're paying for it one way or another, and that's usually in the form of higher taxes elsewhere," said Fletcher, an up-and-coming star with the socialist New Democrats.

The state Board of Equalization often exempts new businesses from corporate income taxes for five years. Local taxing authorities give property tax breaks. Meanwhile, the Growing North Dakota plan includes lots of low-interest loans, grant money and other sorts of financial incentives.

Sen. **Fred Risser**, the Democratic president of the Wisconsin Senate, spoke disparagingly of tax breaks even in a high-tax state such as his.

"Quite honestly, we're not trying to go out and pirate companies from other areas," he said.

"What our incentives are in Wisconsin is we think we've got a good qual-

ity of life. We think it's a great place to live, that we've got a good educational program, we've got basically clean air, clean water and clean government."

Development mavens also play up similar attributes in North Dakota, and that may be the better approach than tax breaks, said **Don Kettle**, associate director of the La Follette Institute of Public Affairs at Madison, Wis.

"What we know from the research on tax breaks and other kinds of incentives of that sort is that they tend to be a lot more important for policymakers than they are for the people the policymakers are trying to attract," Kettle said. "Taxes are important but rank far, far down the ladder of things that are important to business."

So why do states insist on giving tax breaks? Everyone does it, Kettle says, and it's one of the few places the state can have some sort of immediate influence.

The exception to the anti-incentive discussion was Rep. **Steve Cutler**, GOP speaker pro tem of the South Dakota House.

"We've used several different types of tax incentives to attract companies, whether you believe in that or not, and that has been successful in South Dakota and it continues to work," Cutler said.

Mall of America — Farm Style

What North Dakota official would wrap up an 11-page speech with this zinger: "I have probably frustrated or made uncomfortable a lot of people here this afternoon.?"

Chuck Fleming, of course.

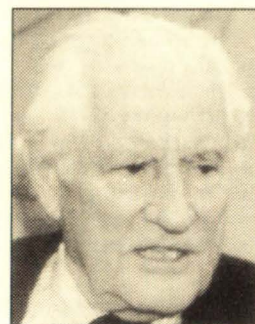
The habitually blunt chief of staff for Gov. **George Sinner** spoke to the state's higher ed board in Walhalla July 13 as the board struggled to define its role in economic development.

Fleming's presentation was a mixture of damnations and dreams. He hacked the Ag Consultation Board and the Ag Extension service for not pursuing innovative approaches to agriculture. North Dakota farmers must change or "perish," Fleming said.

He also decried his visions for the state, some of them collected on a 3,000-mile tour of other state's "unique agricultural enterprises" in 1991. His favorite dream involves creating a \$1 million agricultural theme park in North Dakota, next to an interstate highway.

Visitors could watch raspberries harvested for juice, sheep milked for Roquefort cheese and chickens raised to produce low cholesterol eggs. Ranchers could see how aspen trees and crop residues can be used to feed livestock. Children could drive go-carts powered by manure-derived methane and watch chicks being hatched.

Fortnightly update



Velva, N.D., native **Eric Sevareid**, a long-time national television news reporter and commentator, died in Washington, D.C., at age 79. . . . Across most of North Dakota, unusually cool,

Eric Sevareid

rainy weather has delayed harvest. . . . UND space sciences professor **Joanne Gabrynowicz** successfully overcame objections from the **Bill Clinton** campaign to insert into the Democratic national platform a sentence touting the U.S. space program. . . . **Sandra Tulchinsky**, on the job just seven months as head of marketing for the North Dakota Department of Economic Development and Finance, was fired by EDF director **Mick Bohn**. . . . The two candidates for governor have been arguing about whether personal finances are a proper issue in the campaign. Their incomes: Democrat **Nicholas Spaeth** and wife: \$95,198. Republican **Ed Schafer**: between \$428,000 and \$819,000. . . . Wahpeton native **Louise Erdrich**, acclaimed author of "Love Medicine" and other books, turned down an offer by Gov. **George Sinner** for the state's highest honor, the Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award, saying she didn't feel worthy. She now lives in New Hampshire. . . . Chicago Bulls coach and former NBA great **Phil Jackson**, a Williston native, did accept the honor from Sinner. . . . The North Dakota Board of Higher Education, under new President **Gene Martin** of Grand Forks, spent a two-day retreat exploring ways to forge a larger role for colleges and universities in state economic development. . . . A proposal to consolidate all North Dakota courts into a single system would cost \$8 million. That price tag could scuttle the idea. . . . A group is proposing an initiative for the fall ballot to tax solid waste and use the proceeds for education and recycling. Meanwhile, Municipal Services Corporation announced a deal to dispose of all the non-toxic solid waste from more than 100 General Motors plants around the nation in a landfill near Sawyer. . . . A Washington state man, **William Menz**, 72, was found shot to death at a roadside rest stop near Beach. . . . UND President **Kendall Baker** decided to live on campus after all. The university will remodel the president's mansion to correct structural defects and to rid the basement of radon.