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## North Dakota Intelligencer: August 22, 1994

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*Grand Forks Herald*

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# Intelligencer

An inside report on people, politics & power



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Number 10

## Hagens under fire

### That's PSC's Bruce and labor's Craig

With few issues, opponents opt to dig into travel records

The 1994 statewide campaigns have somehow mutated into what we'll dub the Festival of Clerks.

In the labor commissioner and Public Service Commission races, kvetching over phone bills and travel records has driven out any policy debate. The Republicans got travel records for all the Democratic elected officials earlier this summer. This month, Democratic-NPL Executive Director **Carol Jean Larsen** sent a letter to the Republican officials asking for the same.

Granted, running on issues is tough for the PSC and to a lesser extent, labor commissioner. **Bruce Hagen**, the incumbent Democrat on the PSC, cited several of the hot topics when discussing his race against Grand Forks attorney **Ward Johnson**. There's retail wheeling, he said, and externalities, and rail car supply. Since Johnson shows no signs of being versed in this arcana — who is? — he's made phone calls the big campaign issue.

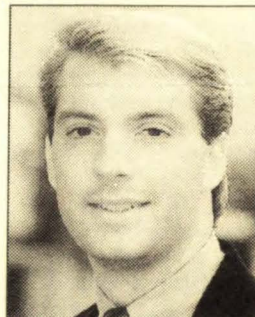
His attacks produced headlines, often the primary goal of a negative news conference. Accusatory headlines find effective use in television spots. Of course, this year there's the Hagen vs. Hagen problem, Bruce vs. **Craig**.

The Aug. 4 letter from Johnson to B. Hagen starts out: "Recently I read in the press several stories about the Democrat candidate for Labor Commissioner criticizing the incumbent Labor Commissioner for excessive use of the State Telephone System.

"These stories caused me to decide to look into your personal use of the



**Bruce Hagen**



**Craig Hagen**

State Telephone System," he continued, overcapitalizing. The assertion is amusing, since Sen. **L.L. "Pete" Naaden**, R-Braddock, acquired the records months earlier.

Disingenuousness aside, Johnson did score a hit on B. Hagen's assorted personal phone calls. The veteran incumbent reimbursed the state \$74.38 for what he called inadvertent ones, more or less confirming mistakes. But do North Dakotans really hold it against someone for calling his elderly father on company time?

#### Craig owns up

The Democrat running for labor commissioner, **Gary Holm**, also scored a hit when he publicized the 1992 trip to the resort town of Polson, Mont., made by C. Hagen and three of his staffers. Travel vouchers did not show the side trip, instead listing only Helena. Hagen responds that it was a mistake, one he takes personal responsibility for, but the trip was legit. Indeed, the auditor's office had spotted the problem earlier, and made a verbal recommendation not to do it again, he says.

Holm's research was flawed. At his Friday news conference, he scored the labor office for getting reimbursed \$609 more than it had receipts for. Apparently he just didn't copy the receipts from other files than Hagen's, because the documentation was there.

Holm was also all over the map that Friday: These are fraudulent

vouchers, they appear to be fraudulent. I'm not saying they're fraudulent, do they look fraudulent to you? Apparently his supporters told him to toughen up, for on Monday he said baldly: These are fraudulent.

But asking Attorney General **Heidi Heitkamp** to investigate could backfire. She's liable to identify a screw-up, but not a Class C felony. If she does determine a crime was committed, then C. Hagen can just charge Democratic partisanship.

C. Hagen seemed chastened, realizing he had been put on the defensive. He acknowledged the Friday camping trip made it look like he was ducking the issue, so now he's always going to be available to the media and his staff will make no comment. He also thought about his own campaign, and how it takes something different or unusual to make the news.

#### Trips, trips, trips

The drip, drip, drip of travel might even seep down into legislative races. Nineteen lawmakers and seven Legislative Council staffers attended the National Conference of State Legislatures annual meeting in New Orleans from July 23-28.

Last year's meeting in San Diego produced a spate of "gotcha" stories about other state's legislators skipping meetings, and led to the downfall of Minnesota's DFL House speaker **Dee Long**. Nothing of the sort has been suggested of North Dakota's attendees, but that doesn't prevent a candidate from casting innuendoes.

Democratic senators who attended: **Tish Kelly**, Fargo; **David O'Connell**, Lansford; **Rolland Redlin**, Minot; **Kit Scherber**, Fargo; **Corliss Mushik**, Mandan. Republican: **Ray Holmberg**, Grand Forks; **David Nething**, Jamestown; **Bob Stenehjem**, Bismarck; **Herb Urlacher**, Taylor.

Democratic representatives: **Joe Kroeber**, Jamestown; **Bruce Laughlin**, Finley; **John Mahoney**, Center;

**Travel:** Please turn to Page 3



# Clayburgh slips out bad poll; Conrad has many advantages

Say you're a challenger to a powerful incumbent, and you've got a poll that shows your opponent at just 51 percent. Unfortunately, the poll also gives your numbers at a weak 27 percent, hardly anything to boast about. Furthermore, the poll's margin of error is plus or minus 5.6 percent, much higher than your normal pollster would accept. So what do you do? You could sit on it, or release it right away and try to take political advantage of it.

Dr. **Ben Clayburgh's** campaign decided to publicize it on Aug. 10, well after the July 20 and 21 survey dates. The press release was so late and the margin of error so high that the media ignored the results. The release also left out the Republican's figures against Democratic Sen. **Kent Conrad**, as if someone would forget to ask.

The poll was conducted among 309 likely voters in the state by The Luntz Research Companies. The Clayburgh-Conrad questions were added to a 14-state survey on health care for the Small Business Survival Committee. Pollsters try to drum up business like anyone else.

Apparently the poll was a point of much internal debate, with campaign manager **Paul Traynor** pushing for immediate release. Traynor had advocated a campaign focusing on issues other than health care, but Clayburgh has stayed medical. Traynor, of the Devils Lake Traynors, was let go Aug. 8.

(Conrad and others like to label Clayburgh a single-issue candidate, but to be fair, health care IS the issue nowadays. Conrad's position has changed over the year, as well, opening the door to criticism. The situation in

Congress is currently too fluid to determine the final political fall-out for the race.)

At a Grand Forks news conference Aug. 11, Clayburgh touted the great shape of his campaign. He noted that his son, three-term state Rep. **Rick Clayburgh**, had joined as an assistant now that he had taken the state law boards. The campaign added **Patrick McCambridge**, a Bush-Quayle campaign guy and Republican National Committee employee, as an opposition research expert. **Linda Rhinehart**, another Washington GOP worker, heads fund-raising operations. Also on board is **Pam Youngren**, who worked on Gov. **Ed Schafer's** campaign.

Remember how **Earl Strinden** rued letting the D.C. experts take over his campaign?

Clayburgh points to new and very early Conrad television commercials as evidence the incumbent's worried. The Democrat may indeed see a need to shore up his image, or numbers, or both. Besides he has the money. The spot is an effective piece on how Conrad buttressed North Dakota's farmers and other flood victims with disaster aid, touching equally on his caring for the state and effectiveness in Washington as an incumbent.

The Democratic letter-writing machine has geared up full-time to Conrad's advantage on editorial pages. Rep. **Earl Pomeroy**, D-N.D., also gets his words of praise, but the odd thing is the volume of letters lauding Sen. **Byron Dorgan**, D-N.D. He's not running for anything. Letter writing is another traditional political strength for the Dems. Notice how few missives one sees backing GOP Gov. Schafer.

## Asbridge cultivates AAM membership

The American Agriculture Movement (AAM) made headlines in the late '70s and early '80s, organizing tractorcades to Washington, D.C., during the farm crisis. But one hears little of the group nowadays, and **Tom Asbridge**, the national executive director, wants to change that.

The Carson-area rancher ran for the U.S. Senate in 1992 against then Rep. **Byron Dorgan**, D-N.D., and Fargo Commissioner **Steve Sydness**, a Republican. Asbridge received about 2 percent of the vote.

Also in '92, he helped organize the Independent Non-Partisan League, in the hopes of creating an alternative political force outside the two parties. Nothing much came of it.

Asbridge, 47, has hovered around the edges of the ag scene ever since he ran into farm-debt troubles back in the early '80s. He addressed last winter's anti-Canadian wheat rally at the International Peace Garden.

Since March, he's been based in Washington, heading the three-person office of the American Agriculture

Movement. Asbridge won't release the group's numbers, but his immediate goal is to add members. Very few are in North Dakota; AAM's strength lies in the southern states.

"My responsibilities are to basically help rebuild the organization and reach out for new membership, and bring some of the issues that most of the members feel are significant onto the table and expand the debate," he told The Intelligencer.

Asbridge said many politicians say they want a wholly new approach to the 1995 farm bill, but at closer look, they really don't mean it. So AAM advocates a "par economy," pricing agricultural goods at their real value.

"The consensus of the conventional wisdom in the country is the agriculture crisis of the late '70s and '80s has ended," Asbridge said. "When one looks at the statistics, we know that's not true. There's another crisis looming on the horizon.

"We seek a better deal in Washington. We believe that can be done without the use of subsidy. We're not the

farm organization that's here with its hat in the hand looking for a welfare check. That's the reason we think people will join."

AAM opposes quick action on GATT, hoping the agreement can be improved if delayed into the next Congress. It also calls on Agriculture Secretary **Mike Espy** to extend CRP contracts on his own authority, rather than requiring congressional action.

Asbridge emphasizes "building a bridge" to consumers, whom he calls natural allies to farmers.

As he wrote in the Aug. 9 edition of The New York Times in a letter to the editor: "The American farmer never wanted to become dependent on subsidies for income. But the choice was to take the subsidy or nothing. We want to do our job and to be paid fairly. We regard the food consumers of America as our greatest allies. Perhaps together we can extract sound policy from Washington."

Finally, the days of the tractorcade are gone, Asbridge said. They just don't fit the times.



# Is U.S. Term Limits 'elite' group?

Expect to hear lots more about U.S. Term Limits, the Washington organization that spent more than \$33,000 to get a term-limit initiative on the November ballot. Other states have documented cases of petition fraud, so Secretary of State **Al Jaeger's** suspicions about the North Dakota drive continue to mount.

A 1993 study by Common Cause, the public interest lobby, found most financing for term-limit campaigns came from large contributors in business, although it's tough to pin down. Only Michigan requires adequate financial disclosure forms. For the 1992 election, less than half of the \$370,000 the term-limits drive raised came from small contributions.

The Howard Rich Irrevocable Trust contributed \$102,940; OKE Associates, a business partnership run by U.S. Term Limits leader Eric O'Keefe, gave \$60,000; and \$30,000 came from Crunch Fitness, a New York health club run by **Doug Levine**, a USTL finance committee member. **Howard Rich** is USTL president.

Fairmount State College (W.Va.) professor **David Rausch** calls the term-limits campaign an "elite movement."

"From my research, it's a very small group of people, really small," said Rausch, who is writing his dissertation on term limits.

## Top lobbying job

More changes at the Greater North Dakota Association. **Kerry Paulson**, vice president for governmental affairs, is leaving to work in Minneapolis, Minn., for U.S. Tobacco. (Ah ha! Yet another GNDA-tobacco connection, just as trial lawyers alleged dur-

## Hall talk

ing the 1993 tort reform debate.) Paulson will handle lobbying duties for the Upper Midwest. The GNDA position he leaves is a top job in North Dakota's lobbying world, and it's already drawn many applications.

## Maixner on board

**Rick Maixner**, the former Democratic assistant majority leader in 1989, has gone to work for Sen. **Byron Dorgan**, D-N.D. He's handling natural resource issues and has already reached out to ranchers and other ag interests in the west. Apparently Dorgan thinks something can be worked out on the great wilderness debate out there; i.e., the "Badlands on the Brink" proposal put forth by various environmental groups. Maixner recently completed UND Law School and also chairs the state Gaming Commission.

## Fading away

Political controversies often have a way of petering out. Take the old dispute over Republican Securities Commissioner **Cal Hoovestol** and his firing of two staffers, **Cliff Ness** and **Pat Schmidt**. There was some doubt as to whether the firings were done legally, since both were classified workers. Hoovestol argued that he was reorganizing the department and thus had the authority to make changes.

Insurance Commissioner **Glenn Pomeroy**, Hoovestol's predecessor and political nemesis, said the Central Personnel Board would take a

hard look at layoff policies to ensure that employee rights were protected. The board did, but no substantive changes followed. The form Hoovestol used to justify the firings has been withdrawn from state use, however.

G. Pomeroy was involved with another dispute that petered out, his conflict with **Brian Pardo**, the Texas businessman who sells insurance policies for people dying of AIDS. During the 1992 campaign, Pomeroy went after Pardo for sales pitches in North Dakota; Pardo bought TV commercials mocking Pomeroy. Pardo sued, but later withdrew the action.

Coincidentally, **Michael Moore's** "TV NATION" skewered the AIDS marketplace and Pardo in a show before the one lampooning North Dakota. Moore discussed the piece in an Aug. 2 online conference in the Delphi service. His comments put the North Dakota satire in perspective: "Our show is about our point of view. This is not a news show. Think of it as a column on an editorial page or a political cartoon. It's not about presenting the other side. Our concern with the AIDS piece was that people with AIDS should not have to resort to selling their life insurance policies."

## Less pompous

More than two years later, the ornate Bismarck inauguration of Chancellor **Douglas Treadway** still rancors some as an example of pompous circumstance, especially since Treadway left for California last March. Hence the decision not to hold an inauguration for the new chancellor, **Larry Isaak**. It probably would have been too tough to go back to private contributors for financing, anyway.

## Travel

Continued from Page 1

**Bill Oban**, Bismarck; **Jennifer Ring**, Grand Forks. Republicans: **Leroy Bernstein**, Fargo; **James Boehm**, Mandan; **John Dorso**, Fargo; **Clara Sue Price**, Minot; **Gerald Sveen**, Bottineau.

Leadership of the respective parties chooses who can go. The senators are either running again or in the middle of their four-year term, save for Kelly, who chairs the interim Tax Commit-

tee and has been active in NCSL. She's not seeking re-election.

## Mahoney's woes

During the 1992 election, Republican legislative candidates knocked Mahoney for traveling to Puerto Rico for a workers compensation conference. (Dorso also went.) First Puerto Rico, now New Orleans. One could go negative.

Of course, Mahoney's got new political problems, a drunken-driving arrest that hit the front pages statewide. He was extremely forthcoming and

apologized for the incident, and faced facts too: The arrest hurts his potential for a statewide candidacy.

Meanwhile, we hear that Sen. **Dan Wogsland**, D-Hannafor, should win his re-election handily in District 23, despite the conviction for drunken driving and speeding. Republican **Curt Twete**, a McVillie implement dealer, apparently gets het up over desecration of the American flag. That's an honorable position for a former American Legion national commander, but hardly a defining issue in a local legislative race.

Now if only there were an accounting error someplace . . .

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# U.S.-Canada trade war: less than meets the eye

**Lawson Jones**, a Webster, N.D., farmer and president of the U.S. Durum Growers Association, worries that this country's durum growers could be swamped out of business if Canada doesn't stop dumping grain at their back door.

**Will Harder**, a Low Farm, Man., producer and chairman of the Canadian Wheat Board's advisory committee, says American farmers have only themselves to blame for supporting subsidy schemes that deplete domestic grain supplies and force U.S. millers to import Canadian wheat.

These two savvy Prairie grain producers should have a lot more in common than they do. But a cultural and political gulf separates them. That gulf underscores the perception in some quarters that "free trade" between the world's two largest trading partners is anything but free.

What does the future hold for U.S.-Canada trade relations? And what does it signal for border states, including North Dakota?

To hear it from grain growers like Jones, and the politicians they're lobbying for protection, such as Sen. **Byron Dorgan**, D-N.D., it's a road littered with economic landmines.

At every turn, they warn, Canadian subsidies threaten to overwhelm American producers with underpriced commodities. Conversely, they argue, Canada unfairly limits imports of U.S. grain and supports several industries such as poultry and eggs that virtually lock out any American imports.

**John Blackwood**, who lobbies Parliament for the Conservative administration of Manitoba premier **Gary Filmon**, says the United States is far more protectionist than Canada and simply enjoys pushing its much smaller neighbor around. In any case, says Blackwood, Canada's consul general in Minneapolis during former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's tenure, most of the "problems" between Canada and the United States are set off by local situations in border states such as North Dakota.

In other words, there's a lot less than meets the eye in these trade "wars," he says.

Trade developer **Jim Phillips**, founder and president of the Canadian-American Trade Alliance, agrees. The New York state-based for-

## Business beat

mer abrasive's industry executive says most of the \$211-billion annual trade between the two country's is free, clear and profitable.

His group, working with local trade developments agencies such as the Crookston, Minn.-based Red River Valley Trade Corridor (RRVTC), aims to reduce the hassles even more.

"Most of what we do together is done with no problems whatsoever," notes Phillips. And whenever problems such as wheat and durum arise, he says, "we need common sense and cool heads in dealing with them."

"While we're fighting on those issues, let's not forget that there are literally thousands of commodities and products, millions of transactions that take place hassle-free," he says.

He finds plenty of strong allies on the Prairies.

RRVTC founder and director **Jerry Nagel** says conflicts over commodities such as grain and softwood lumber can sour some people on trade. But beyond some highly politicized local reaction, the effects of those squabbles rarely turn heads outside that particular industry.

"If you take the raw resource, controversial stuff (wheat, lumber, fish) off the table, we have a lot of positive agricultural and manufacturing trade going on between the two countries," Nagel says. There are far more private discussions going on about expanding trade that limiting it.

"At the local level, I'm increasingly positive about the potential for trade and business with Canada," he says. "And what you'll find is that people in these talks aren't getting too caught up in the issue of commodities such as wheat."

The subtext is just as clear as the optimistic message from economic developers. While farmers may fret over Alberta wheat and loggers over logs from British Columbia, U.S.-Canada commerce will continue to expand because it's in the greater interest of the greater number to do so.

"For every \$1 million in trade between us, you're talking about 20 jobs," says Phillips.

## Fortnightly update

North Dakota elevators reported about 1 percent of wheat bought between April and June came from outside the country. Gov. **Ed Schafer** ordered the elevators to keep track of the amount of wheat to determine whether they were buying large amounts from Canada. . . . Initiatives to regulate waste, establish a state lottery and limit the terms of office were rushed to make deadline for the November ballot. In the process, two of the initiative petitions lack the required number of signatures, and one sponsor said he intended to continue collecting names up to the last minute. . . . The State Employees Compensation Commission recommended that North Dakota state employees receive annual cost-of-living raises for the 1995 and 1996 fiscal years. The increase reflects a panel's decision that employees be "held harmless" from inflation during the 1995-97 biennium. . . . Residents angered at the endorsement of a state seat belt bill are signing a petition to repeal it. The petition has the minimum of 12,776 names required to assure a statewide vote. The proposal will appear as Measure 4 on the November ballot. . . . Consumers will benefit as Congress nears passage of a bill that will permit banks to open branches across state lines. The U.S. House law passed the bill by voice vote, and it awaits final action in the Senate. . . . As opposed to other battalions in the state, the North Dakota National Guard is growing. The North Dakota Gaurd will add about 400 soldiers in the next five years, bringing the total to more than 4,000. The latest troop count was 3,606. The North Dakota National Guard is hoping that Grand Forks will become a national training center for soldiers learning to use the portable Stinger missile launcher, a key weapon during the Persian Gulf War in 1991. . . . Sens. **Byron Dorgan** and **Kent Conrad** say they have proposed an amendment in Congress that would provide more individual attention for students at the Wahpeton Indian School. They said their amendment would include health and social service professionals, child psychologists and substance-abuse counselors on the staff of the school. . . . A House-Senate conference committee has approved \$32 million for the Garrison Diversion project. The bill is expected to win easy approval in both the House and Senate. . . . Despite isolated pockets of water and bug damage, an industry official said this year's sunflower crop in the Dakotas appears well. While heavy rains have damaged up to 25 percent of the Red River Valley crop, that's only about 5 percent of the total crop.