

**Ronnie Brooks**  
**Narrator**

**Edward P. Nelson**  
**Interviewer**

**August 8, 1979**

**EN:** Today is August 8, 1979. I'm talking with Ronnie Brooks, former aide to Governor Rudy Perpich. My name is Ed Nelson.

Mrs. Brooks, could you give me a little summary of your background, what you're doing now, where you went to school, where you grew up?

**RB:** I'm originally from New Jersey and did my undergraduate work at the University of Michigan and my graduate work in political science at Michigan State. After that, I taught political science for a period of time at Michigan State and at Lansing Community College.

I moved to Minnesota in 1971. My original job was for the State University Board, after that I headed Senator McGovern's presidential campaign effort. And in January of 1973, I joined the staff of the Minnesota State Senate and became the director of majority research.

When Governor Perpich succeeded to office in November of 1976, I went to work for him in the position that we call Special Assistant for Program Development and Legislative Liaison. And in that capacity, I handled all the developments and proposals to the Legislature, and the planning for them by the executive agencies, modifying them, presenting them to the Legislature.

I also served during that period as the Governor's representative to the Environmental Quality Board, although my participation on the Environmental Quality Board was not directly related to the powerline dispute. Most of the decisions in that dispute as far as the EQB was concerned had been made prior to Governor Perpich's term of office.

I left government on January 1979 and began directing a project on environmental terms. My motivations for which came directly from my involvement in the powerline dispute. I am trying to develop an organization to facilitate the resolution of disputes over environmental resource development issues. We have been doing that, forming an organization, which is now a non-profit corporation.

Currently our first project, under that center, is for the City of St. Paul, coordinating their involvement in the negotiated investment strategy project, which is a way of rechanneling federal, state and local commitments to urban revitalization projects. And what I will do is be resolving conflicts between city and the private sector in St. Paul, amongst competing city agencies and then representing the city in its negotiations with the state and federal government.

**EN:** What were your duties when you were working for Governor Perpich in respect to the powerline issue?

**RB:** Well they were never clearly specified. In some ways I became the chief flack catcher for the administration in terms of being the contact person and occasionally the strategist for dealing with hotly contested issues. The job-core dispute became my responsibility, reserve mining became my responsibility and the powerline became my responsibility. Not, I say principally because they were environmental issues but because they were issues laden with conflict and a lot of my responsibilities related to being the highest-level person in the governor's office dealing with substantive public policy issues as opposed to administrative press.

**EN:** What sort of activities were you involved in, meetings, advising the governor?

**RB:** Well there were several categories of activities. One was certainly meeting with the diverse constituent groups related to the powerline controversy, and that was far more than the protesting farmers or the utilities, and related to constituent groups like legislators affected by the dispute. Environmentalists, tax people, for example, when it came to dealing with questions and to putting together a series of proposals, some of which were substantive like the modifications on the power plant siting law to mitigate some of the facts. Others were strategic recommendations like we ought to have joint legislative hearings. We ought to try and to involve an impartial third party in negotiations because governmental agencies have lost their credibility. It also required my following through with relevant state agencies in the legislature. These attempts were on commitments that the governor had made.

**EN:** When you began the job with Governor Perpich, what stage was the powerline controversy in? What sort of situation did you walk into?

**RB:** When I first started working for the governor, which was in December right before he was sworn in, the Anderson administration was still quite heavily involved. And the earliest that I remember was a meeting, when it seemed to be very close to the panic situation. In other words, local law enforcement officials were very concerned about their ability to maintain any kind of law and order and the terms—The National Guard, were being used at that time.

It was also a time when I didn't know a big deal about the issue and I don't think many people did. When nobody exactly understood what our options were, so for me it involved a fairly heavy and rapid submergence into what were the issues, what had been the prior actions, what changes did the advent of the new administration make and what new possibilities existed. But it seemed like a hard confrontation experience or situation. One, which had a great potential for exploding before we had an ability to learn what we had to do to control it.

**EN:** This is a very general question but falls upon something you just said. You quickly became submerged into the issues. Can you summarize and maybe give an idea of what you felt at the end of that process, your first real grasp on the situation?

**RB:** As I indicated to you earlier, now 2½ years past, it's very difficult for me to recall with any

accuracy what I felt at a particular time that has passed and as a result of what I now know from Monday morning quarterbacks, what I might have, should have felt as opposed to what I did. I remember feeling enormously overwhelmed. It was my first week or two, working for the governor and it seemed like an enormous responsibility. What I tried very early on to do was to assure myself that I made no judgments as to who was right and who was wrong, but try to approach the situation as one of conflict and what we could do to resolve that conflict. Without saying that either the farmers had received a bad deal from administrative agencies or that the administrative agencies had worked and now the power co-ops have to be allowed to go ahead.

It was an entirely new situation to me and I think very new to the governor. The leverage we knew had an enormous impact on the future of the administration. And it was not long before I realized how you can get so bogged down in a conflict like this that it becomes difficult to continue with the administration. The other thing I remember knowing was that all of these events came at a time when I was trying to understand what kind of governor Governor Perpich would be. I didn't know him well before I went to work for him. So we had not had a long established pattern of communication, which added sort of to the difficulties of handling that issue.

**EN:** Again, I'm asking a specific question. The issues at the time, I'm sure you've reflected on what you thought were the issues then and now looking back, what do you think in those early weeks were the major issues, on both sides?

**RB:** I don't remember correctly. I think that my impression on what the issues were, were related to the health and safety questions augmented in intensity by anti-governmental, anti-agency feelings. One of the things that was very, very important in the way the conflict evolved were those anti-administration feelings because there was a great deal that the new governor did to influence mood by merely being the new governor.

And I'm sure many people have referred to the famous secret escapade, which was entirely secret. None of us knew. I can remember the governor calling several key people together and saying that he was about to do something, that was real important and would affect his administration, but he wouldn't tell any of us what it was. And to my knowledge that meant no one.

Then when he made the trip, I can remember some of us not knowing whether he was going to disappear to California, divorce his wife, we had no idea. I mean there were so many things. Nobody knew him very well at that time. But what that trip did was, it raised everyone's expectations about what as possible. Certainly the protesters, but also us. We felt, well it's a new ballgame now. The protesters, the farmers are so pleased with the governor that we'll have room, we'll have time, we can think this through, we can find the solution. And so as a result of it there was enormous optimism around that. And we felt we had in the governor a great personality asset. He would talk to those people in a way that his predecessor was unable to. He could make them feel good and in that process he'd be able to negotiate some kind of agreement.

**EN:** What were the long-range impacts of that—

**RB:** Of that visit?

**EN:** Well you said there was optimism and then..

**RB:** Well I think that that visit was made very early on, but it did begin a chain of what should have been productive events, joint legislative hearings in St. Cloud. Where as a result of that trip the governor came back with some ideas about how we were going to open the process, went to the legislature and asked them to hold the hearings in St. Cloud, that was fine. Those hearings were pretty good. They came up with a well-distilled list of what the issues were. We felt once having gotten that, we could do something about all those issues. So there was a lot of optimism and a lot of raised expectations.

Later on we found it was much tougher to deliver because the governor was operating under the law the same way everybody else was. And less was possible. But we'd raised expectations and the governor, by that trip, managed to focus a great deal of the pressure on himself. That pressure continued, as you know, throughout the subsequent year with marches and I think ultimately made the conflict in a sense harder to solve. Because people's expectations were raised about what the governor could personally do. But he found, number one, he couldn't personally do those things. The gap in affection for the governor increased. If they hadn't expected so much they might not have taken his accomplishments as being so insignificant. Because he did, I think, the administration did accomplish some major changes, which benefited persons affected by the development of high voltage transmission lines. But his presence or what he may have said made those look insignificant. I think he thought he'd make the people happy but they wanted everything to happen.

**EN:** What was your view of the Anderson administration handling of it?

**RB:** It's really very hard for me to say. I was around state government and didn't pay any attention. And all I know about the Anderson administration's effort to handle—let me separate the Anderson's administration effort from Anderson the person. From what I know about the amount of time the EQB spent in public hearings, both within the affected counties and in the state level, the amount of testimony gathered, the conditions attached to the permits for ozone monitoring, for the health studies, I think that the agencies did a substantial job. Now whether they were polite to the farmers I can't make any guesses.

Anderson's own relationship with the farmers—all I know is that it left the farmers very dissatisfied. I remember hearing stories that he refused to meet with them on certain occasions. I don't know because I wasn't there, but they were left with a very, very negative feeling. Part of that I'm sure can be attributed to the substance of the decision, they've lost the case. Part of it has to be attributed to the procedures and I think that it was probably some agency people but also the governor himself.

**EN:** Before Governor Anderson left office, he drew up seven proposals, are you familiar with that?

**RB:** Yes, I don't remember them very well now.

**EN:** Do you remember incorporating them into what you were doing?

**RB:** Some and we went back to that, but only after the St. Cloud hearings where I think we were able to isolate four general areas of concern. The first was the compensation issue. The second was the health and safety issue. The third was the administrative procedures. And had the farmers gotten a fair hearing, I don't know—maybe it was just three. That's all I can think of right at this moment. We then took a look at those issues and tried to decide which was the best way to address them. The health and safety issues had been addressed in one health study and we requested a review then of additional literature, which was gentlemen by the name of Bob Banks over in the health department did.

The question of compensation we addressed in several ways. We tried to put some pressure on the co-ops to be a little less stingy, because there was at least a substantial group of people at that time who thought if the co-ops had been little less stingy at the beginning that would have helped. We also made some changes in the law, which improved the compensation picture both substantively and procedurally by letting them get annual payments rather than one lump sum—by changing the tax structure around. And the question of the administrative procedures we thought was properly handled by the courts and we couldn't do very much about it but to say this was consistent with state law.

So what we tried to do was separate what the legislature could best do and made recommendations to the legislature regarding compensation and tried to create, to move on the good will that the governor had established and tried to create a political or social climate in which these questions could be aired in the most rational fashion possible, which is why we did two things.

One, we passed a moratorium, a voluntary moratorium, by the co-ops and got it and those things are not easy to do. And secondly, finding when we were having trouble facilitating that type of communication, to make a proposal to invite a neutral third party to act as a negotiator in defining those concerns and trying to do—

**EN:** You've touched on the legislative hearing in St. Cloud. Was that Governor Perpich's idea—Your own? Teamwork?

**RB:** We had a number of new legislative movements, I did, during that period. We also had—I can remember thinking that it was too big a problem for the governor to handle all by himself—he could spend his whole life doing that. And so we thought it was a good idea to involve the legislature. I can't remember exactly whose idea it was that the tool to use was the joint legislative hearing in St. Cloud. It's hard to talk about it.

It was my proposal to bring in a neutral because I began to realize—and that it didn't take very long that—before the governor would probably be dragged down in those disputes the same way

everybody else was dragged down. And that before that loss of faith in the governor occurred, it would be best to transport some of the mechanics to a neutral and secondly, that it was just a difficult and time-consuming process that we didn't have the resources to do what should actually be done.

**EN:** When you went to the legislative leaders, can you recall what impression they had? Did they see it as a problem that the legislature had to deal with, as a governor's problem?

**RB:** Initially I believe there was no reluctance on the part of the legislature to become involved in this, at least not that I recall. And you know, I would say to this too and don't mean to be disparaging. The legislature had not been terribly involved in the Anderson administration, not at all and a lot of them were not aware of the magnitude of the problem. It still struck them as being sort of a, you know, a rural problem.

They'd all voted for the power plant siting act, which hardly had any objections on the plan, but they hadn't been involved in it. It wasn't their constituents. But I think and I don't mean to over-emphasize party affiliation, but you had a new democratic governor who was only going to be in there two years before an election. We had democratic leaders that wanted to see the new governor being successful. So I think they probably--it made a lot of sense to them to see, well, this is a problem that could affect all of us. Let's see what we can do.

And the legislature has a vast amount of resources. And we had sort of a minimized ability to draw upon the enormous resources of the executive branch because they were all hated by the protesters anyway. So we couldn't call on the EQB staff at a time when the EQB staff—or count on help from the EQB staff very much because the protesters all hated them. The legislature at that time was pretty neutral.

**EN:** Did you meet with legislators from the area?

**RB:** Oh yes.

**EN:** Did they consider it a great problem or—?

**RB:** Oh yes. They sure did. It was a critical bind for a lot of them. Especially when nobody really had an idea of how big the protest was. There were people who thought, 'Oh, it's just a handful of troublemakers' and there were other people who thought it was a much bigger group. You know I think they both truly depending on what time you were looking at the dispute—and how successful the protesters were in enlarging the dispute.

**EN:** What results came of the legislative hearings and what actions did the legislature take?

**RB:** Well the immediate actions were that there were some substantial improvements in the power plant siting law subsequent, relating to compensation and settlement procedures. There were also changes in the EQB regulations relating to preference given to wildlife management lands and over agricultural lands, and to the extent—I think again a general statement would be

to the extent that the stated agenda of the protesters was the real agenda, state government showed itself to be remarkably responsive on the issue of compensation, on the issue of siting procedures. State government did, I think, a first class job.

To the extent that there was a hidden agenda, which I think there was, but I have no idea how long it was there—the agenda being no line, no towers, not on my land not under any circumstances—we were unable to resolve the dispute. Now all of those other improvements paled by comparison with the altercation.

Now the question that remains years later in my mind is was that always the primary—or during the years before I knew anything about it—the proposal started in 1972, '73 to build a line—the niggardly behavior of the co-ops in dealing with compensation for individuals, the changes in the proposal which made it difficult for people to know where the line was going to go, did those create the hidden agenda? In other words, the fact that they weren't adequately compensated, that they weren't, at least in their own minds treated well by state agencies, did that build up such animosities that even though you made responses later on to the health concerns, to the money concerns, to the procedural concerns, that there was such great negative feeling that there was no way that we were ever going to be able to negotiate?

Because the agenda grew as dissatisfaction grew, and had you been able to satisfy initially on those things, which are negotiable, could we have avoided the dispute? And I don't know because I wasn't there. And I may not even have known if I was there. But it was clear to me at some point during that period, that it didn't matter what we did. Whatever we did the agenda grew, so that the more you worked on it, the more problems you had. And that became so true to me. When we had talked to both sides about a neutral mediator, when we talked about a science court, that as soon as we had one side, the other side balked, as soon as the other side was back—

[Tape interruption]

—which were still the rallying cries at that time. The protesters wanted the agenda expanded to include energy development and underground, and it became a bigger and bigger plan.

**EN:** If the science court idea had been discussed earlier, it may have had a chance?

**RB:** It's possible. The science court was appropriate if the only unresolved issue was health and safety. I thought it was, at the time that I proposed it. It clearly wasn't because there really wasn't that much concern about health and safety. That just proved to be a very effective organizing tool for the people opposed to the line. It was used very well. You know, the protesting farmers, I think with the cooperation of the power companies, did an amazing organizational act. They really did—very skillful.

They made, and you can point to some tactical mistakes. The televised violence, I can't remember the date, but when people were driving tractors around and there was a high probability of injuring a patrolman, the shooting up into the guard's car, began to tell people that it wasn't just a question of the down-trodden. The co-ops made an enormous technical mistake in

refusing to go along with the science court promptly after we had major problems. We pressured them into it a month later, but by that time we lost the farmers. I think they made a mistake. The farmers made a mistake by over-doing their demand for a moratorium. They shouldn't have asked the legislature beyond where it could go. But on the whole, they did a job which is a old political organizing [tool], they took their concern and elevated them to such broad issues that they began to expand their coalition with the anti-nuclear people and with the University and to corporate power people to get a far larger movement than their own narrowly defined concerns would merit.

**EN:** When you say 'they,' are you referring to the protest movement? It would be a good time to ask a question about your view of the structure of the protest movement. Certainly there is a lot of disagreement about the factions, misleading....

**RB:** Well, I don't know. I don't know what was meant by—I talked to Luther Gerlach a lot. He's an anthropologist over at the University, has been for some time, and he talks about the structure of these protest movements. He says that the structure of these protest movements is a fluid one, with multiple leaderships. And that the reason that negotiations are inappropriate to this type of movement is that as soon as the leadership talks to the opposition, they lose their favor and they are no longer believed.

There is some relevance of that description. There were two kinds of individuals that I ran across. And there was a lot of posturing on all sides. Some people involved in the movement were very personally involved. They had their egos, their psyches, their self-definition involved to a point—and because it was such a long struggle for them that it became consuming in their lives—they had an investment in the maintenance of the conflict situation. That was where they got their identities. And in a sense we need, and I don't want to call it fanaticism, but you need that kind of energy to do what had to be done from that perspective, day after day after day.

There was another group of people who had a direct, but more distant interest, a little different perspective. They were not the people that you saw on the lines every day, they were people who felt very much the same kinds of things about the land, that had been on it for generations, that they didn't want it despoiled, that they had been treated rotten, but they had— A lot of the reason why they wanted to change the process was not just selfish for their piece of property. It was so that it didn't happen again, so that the state would know about the sensibilities of rural residents.

Those were the people that I thought we had reasonably well-identified going out and those were the people that made me optimistic in the discussions about the science court. Those were the people were able to talk procedure about— Those were the people who didn't scream at you. Those people came under enormous pressure from their peers, the more radicalized peers. Pressure, which several of them indicated to me privately, forced their withdrawal from the movement. They couldn't take it.

There were a lot of threats going on in the group. And as the more extreme elements gained control, the more moderate, if I can call them that, began to withdraw under pressure. And that meant the organization became more and more extreme, less and less easy to talk with. The same

thing was true on a much smaller scale with the co-ops, that's just the nature of organizational development.

The moderates had a lot of trouble keeping from following the co-ops too. Because their constituency was generally more broad-minded, people that were kind of the doves and deciding what the best deal was, and especially after the Supreme Court decision and they had the law on their side. It became very difficult to deal with the co-ops as well.

**EN:** In terms of the opposition groups, do you think that persons often called outsiders had an impact on radicalizing? Did it come from within?

**RB:** I really would have a hard time answering that question because I didn't spend a lot of time in protest meetings and understanding the interactions between Crocker and the local guys. I think it—logically, it may not have radicalized them, but may have hardened them by presenting with the idea that their movement was wrong, so therefore the longer they could survive, the bigger it would get, the bigger it got the more inevitable its success. That's quite different. I don't think somebody came in and lectured them on radical theory, because the farmers pretty much stayed in control of what they were doing. But I think it changed their outlook about the rest of the world. They were getting on TV a lot, more people were coming and they were coming from more areas and pretty soon they'd all be big heroes and they'd win. So I think it may have helped the movement to keep going.

**EN:** People, protesters think you talked with Governor Perpich, talked with more generally, landowners and local residents..

**RB:** Would you ask that question again? I think I misheard the beginning.

**EN:** Protesters think you or Governor Perpich were in the process of identifying people to talk to. Did you look to the landowners or did you say, well, we realize there were people from Minneapolis involved, let's contact them also?

**RB:** No, it was almost exclusively area folks. With the possible exception of some of those sort of mass meetings that occurred in the Governor's office, when we, well you know, people came forth doubtless and we didn't asked them who they were and Crocker was certainly one of those. But for the major part, the people who we talked directly and individually with were landowners.

**EN:** Energy issues with connections to the nuclear industry, can I infer that you didn't consider them part of this controversy?

**RB:** We were willing to deal with those issues in a separate context. So no, but I'm a little hesitant to speak for the governor on this. But I know from my point of view, there is no question in my mind that if you broadened the agenda any more, there would be no possibility for resolutions. So, no, I didn't want to talk about nuclear power in general.

**EN:** Okay. During the early months you mentioned that you worked hard for a moratorium, was

that a goal in the beginning to get a period where things could cool off?

**RB:** Yes well, what I first saw was some things that had to be done, which included legislative hearings and included negotiations and so forth— And the debate that we had, at several points and I can recall this— It was my own personal feeling that with a moratorium— So the people weren't be distracted, and wouldn't get the feeling that, my god, they are going ahead and building it anyway. But there had to be a finite period otherwise, you were giving in to a side.

A permanent moratorium was a decision to resolve the conflict in favor of the protesters. But we didn't want to do that. We wanted the moratorium as a neutral period during which we would negotiate on the defined issues, reach a resolution of the issues, and then take whatever action was appropriate. Now one of the things that clued me in and I remember as a sharp awakening, as to the fact that compensation was not an issue.

It was during this period of negotiation. We were trying to isolate what it was we could negotiate. The farmers were saying, if you didn't have a moratorium and you started building it anyway then, if you agreed to do something different you couldn't do it, because it violated the bye— That made some sense to me.

On the other hand we were talking about health and safety as being one of those issues. And I remember saying that, people were talking about what the science court could do and I said, not being a technical person, but suppose the science court said that there weren't any health and safety issues except within a—potential shocks or whatever—within a two hundred foot radius of the towers—and I said, “Well then we could fence off those spots,” and the farmers said, “We will not consider fencing as a solution to any health and safety problems.”

And that was sort of the first very tangible clue I had that it wasn't compensation we were talking about, we talking land, we were talking about access to that land. And as soon as I began to see more and more evidence of the hidden agenda, the less optimistic I got and I made a number of efforts to try and let people put the hidden agenda on the table. Let's discuss what people are really concerned about, otherwise we'll spend years trying to solve things that aren't important to them. And I wasn't successful in doing that. And by the time it became, you know, sort of “No Powerline” in official form like that, it was just too late, because all the decisions had been made and they had been ratified and they had been re-ratified and there weren't any options to change them.

**EN:** The decision to bring on an arbitrator. A third neutral party, was that your decision or was it a suggestion?

**RB:** It wasn't a decision. It was my suggestion. It was not an arbitrator. An arbitrator is designated with the authority by the parties to make decisions, it was what we called the facilitator, somebody who could maybe open up some lines of communication get these agendas on the table where they could be negotiated. It was a recommendation that I made, presented to the governor, he liked it and then met with the legislative leaders and they liked it. And I think it was probably about March of 1977.

**EN:** Why someone from out of state?

**RB:** Well there were several reasons. It wasn't by definition someone from another state, but it was by definition someone who had no relationship with the parties that could be interpreted as a bias and what I looked for in checking around and talking to people was someone who had experience in the resolution of non-landowner community disputes. We didn't have anybody in Minnesota that came recommended—

**EN:** Josh Stolberg was the person hired. What were your feelings about him? When you met him, your first impressions?

**RB:** Josh was, there were two individuals that were referred to me by a number of people. Josh was one and a guy named Jerry Comick at the University of Washington was another. I think at the time I first looked Jerry was out of town and my impressions of— Now that I've gotten into mediation a lot more heavily, there are all different types of mediators. There are strong leader types. There are quiet reticent ones. Josh was very methodical, very analytical, point-blank. I disagree with people who feel that you couldn't understand the warring corner's position. You know, definitely, I mean, he's negotiated successfully disputes with Indians and prisoners and he's not one of them. So I had great hopes.

The problem, of course, is once again, partially the hidden agenda. Mediation requires that people wanted resolution to the dispute. The farmers didn't want a resolution for the dispute. They were not going to compromise. They just had a single goal. And secondly, Josh was somewhat tainted by his relationship with the governor during the period in which the farmers realized the governor wasn't going to deliver directly to them what they asked for, which was stopping the powerline. So it wasn't a dispute that I would now classify as having been mediateable at that time rather than at that meeting.

**EN:** How many meeting were held? With the meeting of the various sides?

**RB:** Oh well Josh met with—did most of his work while meeting with the farmers and then meeting with the co-ops. There was only one unsuccessful meeting of both sides. But there were numerous meetings. You know, Josh with one group and Josh with another group.

**EN:** Were you a participant in the summit?

**RB:** Some of those. No. I had. By the time Josh was there, and I recognized my own limitation as being even greater than the governor's limitation in terms of directly gaining the confidence of the parties—one side or the other.

**EN:** When did the efforts to mediate come to an end? Did they start in March?

**RB:** I'd have to check my notes to tell you that. They went on and off for a long time. I would guess, over a year, sporadically, depending on what else was happening. At various times, people

most interested in mediation or the science court were the ones that looked like they were on the short end of the stick. So that before the Supreme Court decision, the farmers thought they were going to win, so they were less interested in mediation. After they didn't, they got little more interested. I'd have to go back in a sense to check the timetable, if I could. But there was never a time that was coincident, where both sides thought it would be to their advantage to mediate.

**EN:** The science court idea was a topic of discussion at the mediation sessions?

**RB:** Yes. Initially it's explaining to them what it was and then we actually began to try to mediate the agenda. We got both sides to agree to a science court. But when we got down to specifics of mediating the agenda, that's when it fell apart again—

**EN:** Can you explain briefly the structure of the science court as it would have been?

**RB:** Yes, some of it was negotiable. But basically it was a panel of neutral individuals who had expertise in relevant scientific or technological disciplines. It might have been an electrical engineer, it might have been a physicist, it might have been a pathologist. And the exact number whether it was three or five was open to negotiation.

So was the procedure for picking them. You might have had lists recommending them or picked by the American Academy of Science or whatever. Each side then, the farmers and co-ops, would select an advocate, also technically competent. They would each select their own. Some one who they felt could assemble the scientific, technological, factual arguments, which supported their substantive position either against the line or for the line. Either that it was a health hazard or it wasn't. Then the two advocates in the presence of the panel would put together their information and you would be able to decide what facts were in—everybody agreed to—and then which issues were the topic of debate. They would then conduct, very much like a court model, the debate, calling for witnesses that would substantiate their arguments.

The arguments would all be scientific and technological. It would be based upon a piece of research done on which it's shown that your hair falls out if you stand on a high voltage transmission line for 37 minutes. The panel then would evaluate that information and would then render its judgment of the best knowledge available on the questions at issue at that time in the history. And our agreement was that based upon the decision of the science court, we would take whatever steps were necessary to modify or change the proposal to make that happen. In other words, we would have EQB reopen hearings based on new evidence. Redo the permit if necessary, or respond in whatever seemed to be the appropriate way from the science court decision.

**EN:** Many of the protesters, I think, have mentioned during various interviews I've had, have felt that the science court was a vehicle to stop the powerline. Do you think that would have happened had the evidence been against the line?

**RB:** Well I think that had you had to have this panel of glorious experts come out and say there was no way you could build that line without endangering human health, it would have been the

end of it. But I don't—nobody—I mean it wasn't as if nobody had looked at the evidence. Nobody thought that there was evidence that was going to lead to that closure. If the protesters really thought that why did they sabotage the science court proposal? And that's a question, not an accusation. I'm not sure. At some point, I think the protesters, at least some of them, looked at that as their last hope. And as they may have thought about it more, that's why they wanted to run the agenda of the science court.

Their ultimate request, their last request regarding the science court was, that the court be entirely changed, in two very fundamental ways. First one was the agenda was broad and beyond scientific and technological issues to policy issues that there would be no nuclear power. Secondly, and I think devastatingly, that the panel be replaced, the panel of neutral scientific experts be replaced by the governor. Now my response to that was, that's not a science court. And that doesn't meet our requirements for illuminating the issue and that it's not scientific.

**EN:** So the decisions on to support or not support the science court idea were based on expectations of the outcome?

**RB:** Right, you know, I believe that we were also able to get co-ops to support it because they had spent a lot of money looking at this issue and they were fairly confident about the health and safety questions and willing to go through that. Their concern was that they had done everything under the law. They had gotten all the permits. They had gotten all the approvals. They'd had their case vindicated by the Supreme Court and now they are asking them to do something else. Well, we could have set an 'X' month time limit on that and said, "Okay that's it, that's fine now. I think they would have had no trouble but what they were worried about was, because the governor was somewhat changeable in his reactions to the issue. I suppose we could say, what if there's the science court and another big protest, then what are they going to ask us to do. So after they won the supreme court case, they were a lot more reluctant about—you know, we've done more than everything and now you're asking us to do more...

**EN:** I assume that you met with utility officials at various times. What were their expectations of yourself and the governor? What did they expect him to do?

**RB:** I suppose, you know, that what their expectations were is real hard. I can tell you what their hopes were. I think initially they sort of hoped for the authority of the governor as the chief law enforcement officer to enforce the law, which had been on their side. I think they also certainly in the early stages were hopeful that the governor could reason, you know, as the dispute went longer and longer and there was more and more violence and spread of damage to life and property. They had strong demands on the governor to put his foot down and enforce the law. And they were joined in that by the contracted unions who were actually doing the work on constructing the powerline.

**EN:** After the Supreme Court decision in July of 1977?

**RB:** Yes, that's right.

**EN:** Things started to heat up again in terms of people moving back out in the fields and the incidents in Traverse County, and then the lawsuits. Do you recall the feelings that you had, the feelings in the Governor's office at this time? The Supreme Court had made its decision. The calls were becoming more militant. Did you see a new stage?

**RB:** I think what I was feeling was probably what a lot of people were feeling. And that was we were less hopeful of our own ability to resolve the dispute in a rational peaceful way. And it was in the winter of that year, that the governor started making his more militant speeches about not tolerating violence and that we had bent over backwards and moved state government to respond. I don't want to say we were losing patience, but we were because we were less optimistic that anything else we could do would improve the thing because we had done a great deal, at least in our own minds to respond to those concerns. And we had very genuine fears of massive outbreaks of violence. And we had almost no ability—the relationships between the more vocal protesters and the governor had become shouting matches. And there just didn't seem to be a very optimistic scenario of the whole thing. And, there is no question that we worked very, very hard on that issue. So had the protesters and so did the co-ops and I don't mean to sort of be self-glorifying ourselves, but we had tried and we had worked hard and we were simply fresh out of ideas for what to do next.

**EN:** A decision was made I assume between calling out the National Guards, State Troopers, something had to be done. Do you remember that time period? What factors were involved?

**RB:** Yes, it was very clear something had to be done, to maintain the law. Nobody wanted to come down on the farmers, and have the state wield violence. On the other hand, one of the great problems was that the governor could not stand by, especially when facing requests by local officials and watch the law flagrantly violated. The decision to use the State Troopers as opposed to the National Guard was based on several factors. The governor felt that the National Guard was not as well trained in those kinds of almost crowd controlled, mind control issues, as were the State Troopers. State Troopers were more professional and likely to do a better job in handling the dispute. And that was the decision made. Calling up the National Guard was also a much higher level of activity in the governor's mind.

Now it was at that point that a lot more people got involved in the Administration and I got less involved. When it came to coordinating troop movements, phone movements, Commissioner Novak, was heavily involved. I served as a communication point, but in fact that wasn't my program area, in designing where they should go or what they should do, or how long they should stay. And I really tried to ease myself out of it at that point. It was pretty clearly indicated that the sort of programmatic changes which I had been responsible for, plus the strategic recommendations, that either they've been ignored in some cases or failed in others and there wasn't much of role for me in that.

**EN:** Do you remember how you felt at that point when you realized that?

**RB:** Yes I felt—there were a whole lot of very personal feelings. You get very involved in the dispute and I can remember having been, myself, an active protester against the war. I remember

one day when there were hundreds of protesters. They looked just like I looked and I must have looked to them just like all those terrible bureaucrats that told us to go home looked. So there was a lot of emotion involved there.

Probably the toughest thing was that although I worked for the government, I was not the government. I only recommended, some of those recommendations were taken; some of them were not. I had one vision at any given period of time about what the appropriate thing to do was. The governor may have had a different vision. And I had no control at all over his actions. So that if I recommended a meeting or a meeting was set up with the understanding the governor was going to attend and the governor didn't attend, I was in a sort of awkward position because I told the farmers that he'd be there and he wasn't. That makes me look like a bad actor and I'm the one, you know, that's gets to be the flack catcher in those situations. And so that was also a profound sense of disappointment to me. I'd done everything that I thought I could and in other circumstances I might have been able to do more, but in any case, we didn't successfully resolve the dispute.

**EN:** What kind of boss was Governor Perpich? You just mentioned some of your feelings.

**RB:** Well I think he was a hard man to work for, for a number of reasons. Governor Perpich had fine intent and I'm not talking about what a substantive policy way, but partially because of what he is and what I am and the fact that we had not developed a working relationship before we were thrown into the day-to-day crises in the administration of state government. So it was difficult to develop that systematic relationship after the fact.

He also came into office with what I considered to be a big disadvantage. And that was he hadn't run for the office. I don't think that meant it was a problem that he had never been around the state because he had been, but he didn't have a team of people who had just gone through an ordeal with him, who were pretty much in place that he knew he could rely on and who shared his vision of the governorship. It was a hodge-podge group of people that had some people from Governor Anderson's staff, some people from Governor Perpich's staff as Lieutenant Governor, and some people who were new from the outside. So we had all those problems of developing working systems, hierarchies and everything that Governor staff's have trouble with.

In addition, I would not call Governor Perpich systematic. He responded a lot based on his experiences, and his gut, if you will, but it was often in a way that he had trouble communicating to other people. So that the staff had trouble seeing the direction he was going in. And because it was unclear whom the Governor was close to, we spend a lot of time with a lot of misunderstandings. Nobody was sure who the Governor knew well, nor who he trusted. And that often meant a more difficult policy, a consistent policy formulation than would have maybe been the case in other circumstances..

**EN:** Did the powerline issue have an effect on the past election?

**RB:** I don't think it had a major effect, no.

**EN:** Alice Tripp challenging Governor Perpich in the primary?

**RB:** No, I mean it may have had some effect. I wouldn't consider the powerline in any sense a major cause of the Governor's defeat.

**EN:** Did the powerline issue spill over into other things?

**RB:** In what sense?

**EN:** During Governor Perpich's administration on the dome stadium [Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome], Bethel College, other things, did you see some overlap?

**RB:** I'm not quite sure what you mean by overlap. No, I think the powerline was sort of the first and hardest hitting of those. I think it did a lot to sort of toughen us up and enable us to deal better with the kind of crises that occur in government. But I don't think there was a direct spillover.

**EN:** What about the media's handling of the powerline controversy? I am sure you had contact with—

**RB:** I have had substantial contact with the media. There's no question that the media played a role, a very important role, which is not to say there was biased coverage. But the very fact that the protest activities made such fascinating news, particularly television news, I think changed the nature of the protest movement itself. It became more geared to the public constituency rather than to the negotiable items.

**EN:** And that had a direct impact on your efforts to negotiate—

**RB:** I think so, yes...

**EN:** In the interest of time I really don't have any other specific questions, are there any others that we haven't touched on, are there things that you'd like to comment on?

**RB:** Well I think there is one thing that ought to be remembered. I'm not saying that this particular dispute was a fluke. But I think it was the result of a combination of factors, which may not be repeated. And those factors were first of all, that CPA-UPA proposed the line under the old system—put it wherever you could buy land—incur a great deal of local opposition in that process and then came and involved state agencies. That won't be repeated. All lines subsequent to that line are occurring completely under a new process. Lines subsequent to that are occurring with a far greater degree of early public participation in the development of the initial proposal. So that's one set of animosities, which have not occurred in subsequent lines.

Second, CPA and UPA were particularly unskilled at public participation activities. I don't know if they've developed more skills, but this whole conflict and the enormous costs associated with it, I think, have made all the developers more conscious of that problem and therefore more

willing to react to it.

Third, the line was routed in a period of unusual public feelings about participation. The times were just riper for some of those protests than maybe at other times. And secondly you did have some sort of unique personality quirks of the key participants involved and that may have been the difference. So at least I am hopeful on what we have seen subsequent to the signing of the CPA-UPA line is that that may not happen quite as badly quite again.

**EN:** Have you been optimistic about the—are you siding mostly on the public forum type environment?

**RB:** It sounded like it from my previous comments. Yes and no. I think they're a great improvement over the earlier processes. On the other hand, I don't think they're adequate in times when we have more and more public burdens, like the need for more power lines and less and less free resources, less and less open unused land. It's just harder to develop anything and especially when the people who bear the burden of the facility are not necessarily those that directly receive the benefit.

In the public hearing process, I'm sure there's a need to make some changes. It's not good enough to just have public hearings, you have to permit the individuals affected by the facility, whether be it a line or hazardous waste facility, to participate in the decision-making. Not just by standing in a meeting, which serves as an organizing rallying point, but in the decision-making process.

State agencies have to share the power they have to site those facilities with the people affected by it. I think there is a lot more thought about it and I am optimistic that we'll be able to take that thought and develop it.

But I'm not so optimistic to think it's going to happen automatically without an awful lot of work and an awful lot of thought by people. I think conflict can be very helpful but the kind of conflict that went on in that dispute had such a fundamental impact on the way people live their lives. It was an intrusion in their ability to enjoy their home and their family, that it was too much. And that kind of conflict has to be avoided in the future.

**EN:** That sounds like a very good summary statement. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**RB:** I don't think so.

**EN:** Well, thank you very much for the interview.

**RB:** You're welcome.