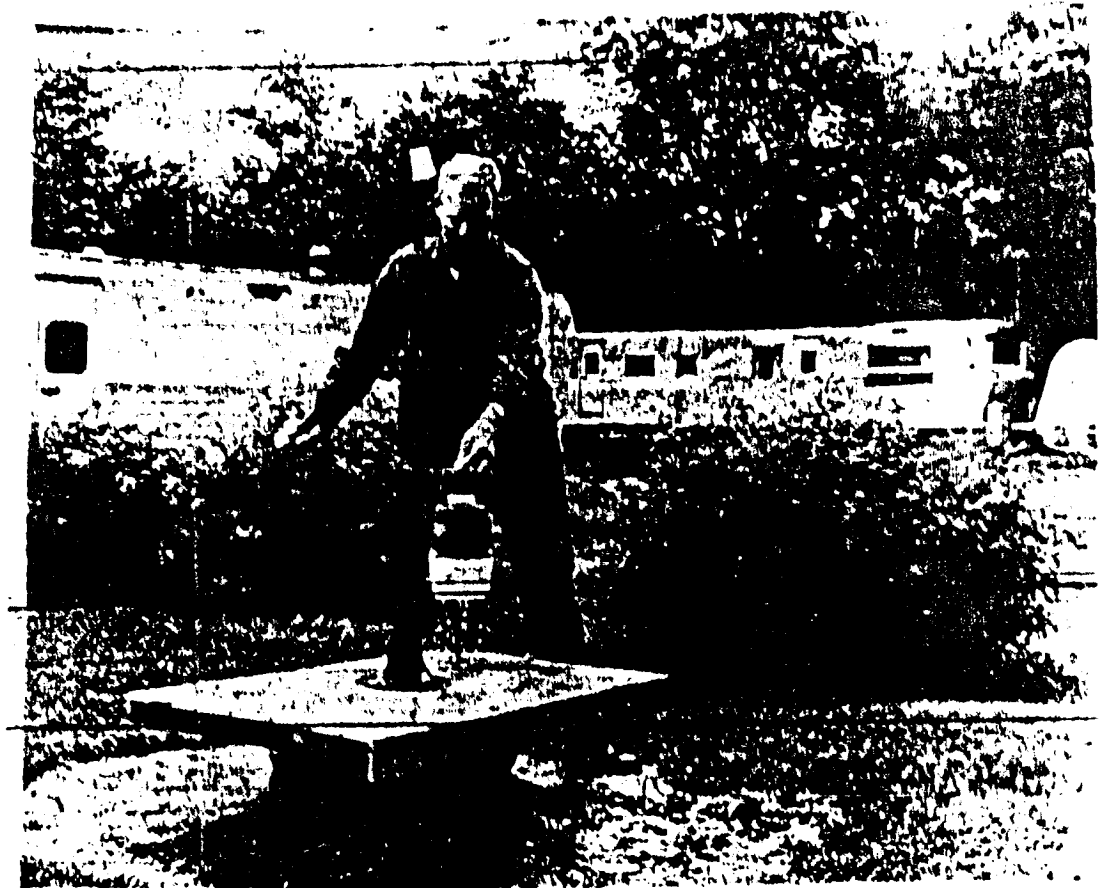


ABM construction work near Nekoma, N. D., is in full swing. Below, Ed Kiley, clerk of the Langdon School Board, talks with customer while at work at the Langdon Post Office.

ABM Impacts in Red Taj

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Melvin Strande, Northwood, N. D., an ABM construction worker, lives in one of about a dozen trailers squatting in the Nekoma City Park.

Nekoma, ND - "Nekoma" means, roughly, "I promised to go somewhere or do something," in Chippewa Indian language.

But for this small, northeastern North Dakota town (population rated 85 by the 1970 census), as well as for some of the surrounding cities and towns, the "promise" seems to have soured - at least for the moment.

In this area, construction on the Safeguard Antiballistic Missile System (ABM) is in full swing. The work has brought a lot of jobs for local people, but, besides bringing jobs and the promise of prosperity, the ABM work has brought a great influx of other workers, along with overloads for roads, schools and public utilities.

When you enter Nekoma, you begin to get an idea of what the problems that have been caused by the influx of people are. When you drive into the town, you have to slow your car down because of the washboard-ruts in the road.

And, if you take a look at the Nekoma City Park, you'll see about a dozen trailers of all sizes parked, all sharing the park's one, small unpainted outhouse and its old, red, long-handled water pump. It looks as if there once was a softball field underneath all that mud and trampled sod, but you can't tell for sure.

If you ask Bill Verwey, Nekoma's mayor, why the city tolerates the intrusion in the park, he'll tell you why - the city doesn't have an ordinance against it and it can't pass one.

Once, before the ABM work started, the dished-out, rutted road was more solid. Last fall, after watching all summer as the road deteriorated from constant use by concrete transports, the city placed weight restrictions on the road. Verwey has since been fighting for funds to black-top the road.

According to Verwey, while funds have been allocated under legislation passed in 1970 allowing impact aid for communities in the ABM project area, Nekoma has seen "not a penny."

Under the legislation, which was sponsored by Sen. Milton Young, R-ND, and Sen. Mike Mansfield, D-MT, about \$11 million was allocated for impact funds for the North Dakota ABM project and a second ABM project, which will be built near Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana.

Thus far, the North Dakota communities have asked for a total of about \$19 million in projects which they feel their communities need and in which they feel the need has arisen because of ABM impacting.

But the release of funds has been slow. Slow enough so that Bill Verwey is still miffed because Nekoma was badly affected.

The money is there, but only about three-quarters of a million has been released - because there's a catch. The catch is that the cities have to go through a lot of government red tape to get the money. In the meantime, some city fathers feel they have been watching as their roads deteriorate, their schools overcrowd, and their sanitary landfills fill beyond the point of safety.

In Langdon, about a dozen miles north of Nekoma, this is the mayor's attitude. As the largest city in the immediate area, Langdon has felt the greatest single increase from the ABM construction. In normal times, Langdon has a population of about 2,200; now the population is over 4,000.

Langdon is asking the government for over \$1.2 million for roads, water, hospital, law enforcement and other community aid. The money isn't coming in very fast.

So, about two weeks ago, Langdon took action by threatening to shut off water to the trailer parks which Morrison-Knudsen Construction Co., the prime contractor for the ABM, maintains for its employees on the north side of Langdon.

This prompted a response from the Department of Defense, which is in charge of the impact monies, and last Friday the government released about \$206,000 for the Langdon water and sewer projects.

Langdon's Mayor, Harold Blanchard, a chiropractor, explained the city's reasons for the drastic action. He said the city has already gone into debt for \$465,000 for road work that has been done since the ABM project started.

"We haven't asked for anything unreasonable at all," he said. "We're assuming quite a bit of responsibility ourselves. We've done everything we could to help the government."

Blanchard said that while some of the requests that towns in the area have made for impact aid have been funded, some of the most important requests have been held up. He said he was shocked to hear one of the requests, a request by the City of Grafton for \$25,000 for a bookmobile, has already gotten through.

"How can they give \$25,000 for a bookmobile when we've got people choking in the dust in our town," he said. "People are supposedly more important than books."

Blanchard said the City Council became disgusted with all the red tape it had to go through to get funds and finally decided they couldn't take anymore.

"It looked like we were going to be backed into the corner again. None of the guys (the commissioners) wanted to do it, but they'd been pushed around enough."

The City Council, Blanchard said, felt they had been held off long enough. In November 1969, the Council had begun to plan for the impact and, in March 1970, the city sent its first applications for aid into the federal government. Nothing came of these applications.

Then, he said, the city received word from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that the Corps of Engineers would hold a problems, planning, and coordinating meeting in April.

But then, Blanchard said, "The Safeguard commander (in Huntsville, MO) postponed the meeting. We had to wait until the other agencies got around to helping us."

So, he said, this is another reason the City Council felt put off by the government.

Would the Council have gone through with the threat to shut off the water to the trailer parks? Blanchard said, "I think if it came to it, yes."

Over at one of the trailer parks, Hillcrest Manors, which has about 180 trailers, the wives of the construction workers don't seem to be so concerned about the whole thing.

Mrs. Mary Murray, who has travelled from construction site to construction site, said she has been in a lot of different towns and there were "water problems in a lot of them."

Mrs. Pat Kuehl, another wife, said, "We really don't have it any worse than the rest of the people in the town."

But, she added, "I don't believe they could shut off the water, it couldn't be legal."

Mrs. Midge Kulchak, who said Langdon is probably the "friendliest town we've been in," said that if the water ever was shut off, "we'll take all our kids down to the Mayor's bathroom."

It's hard to get a perspective of what's really going on, since so many governmental organizations and officials are involved. One thing that stands out is that there is a lot of misunderstanding about impact funding.

For example, while the Nekoma mayor said he had heard all the Young-Mansfield funds had been committed, Edsel Boe, who has been assigned as area development agent by the state Extension Service, said the funding period is open-ended.

Boe explained some of the problems involved in the impact funding. Overall, he said, there are about 120 projects for which communities in the impact area have applied for funding.

One hang up, he said, is that applications must be individually submitted, evaluated and funded - a long, drawn-out process.

Also, Boe said, the Young-Mansfield legislation specifically states that to receive funding, applications must be submitted through "on-going federal programs."

Thus, Boe said, cities needing money do not apply directly to the Department of Defense, but go through other federal agencies, such as the Departments of Agriculture or Health, Education and Welfare (HEW).

"Our problem has been to move the projects through the agencies," he said. "It's hard for the local people to understand and some think it's been getting a little long. The programs have to be designed and built. Some of them we haven't even found an agency for."

"We think they (the agencies) should just handle this with a swish, but they have stacks and stacks of applications."

Boe said while some of the applications become bogged down in the agencies, "once they understand the urgency of our programs, they try to speed them through."

"We try to keep track of when they get to an office and when the office dispenses with them. It's tedious, frustrating work; an average person just cannot understand it unless he works with it."

Boe also mentioned the bookmobile request which Mayor Blanchard had cited as a request that had somehow gotten through before more important requests. Explained Boe, it was probably easy to get through because a bookmobile request doesn't take much planning and doesn't have to go through many offices.

In contrast, Boe said, "it takes time to design a road."

As area development agent, Boe also is assigned as a civilian liaison with the (SACOM) and works with the SACOM community impact team.

The impact team's job is to evaluate the impact fund applications. But, Maj. George Keneipp, team chief, said the team does not try to decide what is good for the communities who apply.

"Who are we to say what they need?" Maj. Keneipp asked.

Maj. Keneipp said the team's job has been a rough one. "In the beginning, it was pretty complicated. It was quite a learning phase, for the state and for us."

There are still misunderstandings which impede progress. While Boe said applications for aid are sent directly to the federal agencies which would fund them and then to the Department of Defense, Maj. Keneipp and Jack McCoy, a civil engineer who works with the SACOM team, said it was the other way around.

But when the community finally gets its application to the right place, there are still hang ups. Ed Kiley, Langdon School District clerk, said that although Langdon is getting aid for extra operating costs brought on by impacting, the aid does not meet actual need.

"Even with impact money, it's still costing the district money," he said. Kiley explained that HEW computes impact funds eligibility for schools along strict guidelines.

The guidelines, he said, specify that school districts near military installations receive aid on a per capita basis for the extra students and, in certain cases, the aid granted is not to the full amount of extra expenses.

This is the case with the children of civilian construction workers, Kiley said.

At his office in the SACOM headquarters near Nekoma, Glen Robertson, a SACOM public affairs officer, confirmed Kiley's explanation. And, he added, the formula used in computing the aid "is very involved."

He explained that another problem involved in funding is in finding the right government program to apply for aid under.

Pointing to a foot-thick, blue book listing federal programs on his desk, Robertson said, "I'm sure no one man knows his way through that book. It's a real can of words."