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July 22, 2014

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SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC
UTILITIES COMMISSION

SD Public Utilities Commission
500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD

Dear Commissioners:

As you well know, the Montana-Dakota Utilities Company and Otter Tail Power Company have proposed to build a 345 kV power line, to be known as the BSSE, which would run from Big Stone City, South Dakota, to Ellendale, North Dakota.. They have identified their preferred route, have presumably done their surveys, and along with their KJL representatives, have held meetings to inform local residents of their intentions. Attendance at their initial meetings was rather low, especially as the first one was scheduled during a blizzard, and another on a bitterly cold, windy night. Because we winter in Arizona it would have been a bit difficult to attend those first meetings, and they obviously chose not to send us any information or progress reports.

Their next step was, of course, to secure easements from those who are located along the route. A sizable number of farmers and rural residents in this area have been selected for the dubious honor of providing these easements, which means having gigantic transmission poles sprouting in our fields, which are obstacles for our farm equipment. In several instances, these poles will constitute the scenic view visible from their front yards, possibly less than sixty rods distant.

Eventually we were contacted by a KJL representative, who furnished us with poor maps on which Barnard, a town seven miles away, was not even included. To the best of our knowledge, their survey was done in the winter, at which time basically the mail and school bus routes were cleared for traffic. This possibly explains why township and field roads were ignored in many cases, ours included; we joined several neighbors in planning and submitting a more satisfactory alternate route. We have received no written notification as to whether this route might be used, yet some neighbors report that they have been told the original route would be followed.

Along with the maps was, of course, the official form for granting an easement, most unfortunately, in this state, an easement in perpetuity. They will make one relatively small payment to us in return for ownership forevermore of, in our case, approximately thirty acres, give or take a little. As you are well aware, this gives them freedom of access, and freedom to erect anything else they may choose along this right-of-way. Since these lines are producing annual revenue for the companies involved, it would seem only fair that the landowners also receive small annual payments, would it not?

The KJL representatives reportedly are making different statements to various people regarding contract prices, the easements themselves, and even the intentions of the farmers involved. They may not realize that quite a few of us farmers communicate with one another, and they're attempting to use the "Divide and Conquer" tactic.

There is one more item which could be mentioned, and that is the possibility of Indian artifacts beneath the surface of our land. We and our immediate neighbor to the south have, over the years, recovered quite a few hammers, arrowheads, etc. in some of the involved fields. A telephone call to Mike Fosha, the director of the Indian Artifacts office in Rapid City, resulted in his stating that KJL surveyed the hills in reference to artifacts, while most such items are generally to be found in the valleys. Therefore, he would recommend that a more thorough survey be conducted.

In summary, we feel that Montana-Dakota Utilities, Otter Tail Power Co., and the KJL associates have been remiss in their duties, and have managed to generate feelings of ill will and mistrust on the part of those from whom they seek easements. Therefore, as landowners who would be impacted by their decisions, we would ask that permission to complete this project be denied.

Yours sincerely,



Arnold E. Dennert



Darlene E. Dennert