

American Viewpoints



We must be as cautious in a man as we are in a machine, which we are willing to give the advantage of a good light.
Ralph A. Bibe, Editor

Windmills considered for electricity

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Can the winds that sweep across the Midwest be harnessed to produce electricity? South Dakota Sen. Jim Abourezk thinks they can, and announced he is laying the groundwork for a formal study of the idea.

Abourezk said his concept is being developed into a formal proposal by the S.D. School of Mines and

Technology, Rapid City, and the engineering firm of R. W. Beck & Associates, Denver. He said he is seeking funds for the proposal from the Energy Research and Development Administration ERDA.

"I think most people agree that every effort must be made to develop alternative sources of energy - sources that do not contaminate our environment.

"Wind is a form of solar energy and is something we have plenty of in the Midwest," he said. "It has to be skimmed or pumped out of the ground and harnessing the wind does not cause air or water pollution," Abourezk said.

Abourezk said the Upper Missouri Basin region is in a unique position to take advantage of wind power.

"We already have a federal hydroelectric and transmission system," he said. "It seems practical that wind power could be integrated with the existing system to meet part of the electrical demand of the region."

The South Dakota Senator said the study would include:

an evaluation of the winds of the region to determine the best locations for single generators or "wind power farms" - a series of windmills to generate electricity. The site chosen for his potential winds is Elk Mountain near Lawrence, Wyoming.

A study of how best to integrate power generated by wind with the federal hydroelectric and transmission system. Wind, like solar power, is not a constant, 24-hour-a-day source of energy. But because of the vast system of hydroelectric dams and transmission lines, wind-generated electricity can be utilized when available, coming back in those times power produced by the dams or coal plants. In such an integrated system, the wind-

mills could increase the maximum amount of electricity available from the system.

A study of the economics of adding wind power generators to see if the new power source could be competitive with conventional sources of electric power.

"Anyone who has lived in our region of the country knows that we have a great amount of wind. That fact, coupled with the fact that the region has a 7,000-mile federal transmission system with 140 substations where wind power could be added into the system, prompted me to suggest this study," Abourezk said.

He noted that "no other region of the country has both of these advantages."

Abourezk said ERDA has begun researching wind generators of 1,000 kilowatts to 2,500 kilowatts.

"While generators of this size are small in the industry today, a series of them could well have the potential to provide a part of our future electrical requirements," he said.

Abourezk said he suggested the proposal to R. W. Beck & Associates because the firm conducted the research preliminary to integrating power from the large lignite generating plants into the Missouri River federal electric system.

"I'm very pleased that one of South Dakota's colleges is involved with this project," Abourezk said. "The School

of Mines has a special capability for doing research on the winds of the regions because of its department of atmospheric sciences."

Abourezk said benefits of wind power research by ERDA would have little meaning unless it is directed toward the federal transmission system and electric utilities.

According to Abourezk, the study - if funding can be arranged - would be conducted in cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the agency that markets power from the Missouri River dams, and the Missouri Basin Systems Group, a power pool of 120 consumer-owned electric systems in the region.

"The feasibility of rural electric cooperatives and municipal electric systems utilizing wind generators would be part of the proposed study," he said.

Abourezk cautioned that wind power is not a "cure-all" to short-range electricity shortages.

"There's a lot of research that must be done before this concept could be developed, and engineers have lots of work to do to develop the wind-powered generators," Abourezk said. "But I hope these initial studies can be made and that momentum can be built behind alternative energy sources."

Abourezk has also introduced legislation to promote the development of solar energy and to help homeowners utilize solar heating and cooling.



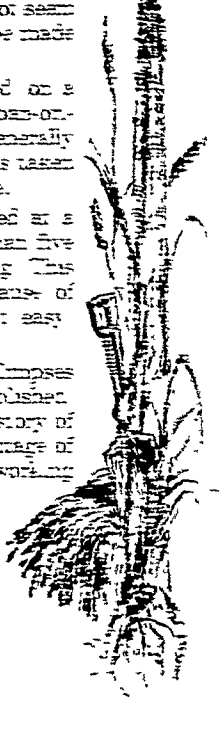
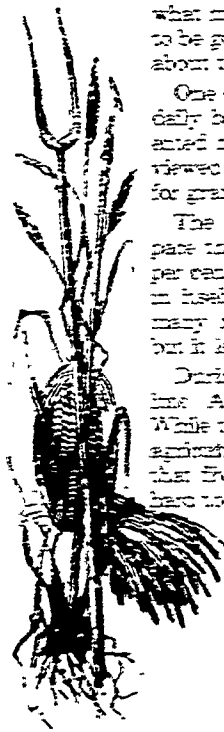
Farm Heritage Traced In Bicentennial Series

As the United States approaches the beginning of its 200th birthday year, many words will be written and spoken about what made America great. And at a time when all does not seem to be going as well as many would like to mention will be made about things that could be better.

One of the facets of American life that must be faced on a daily basis is the necessary habit of eating. For an urban-oriented nation, which is what America now is, food is generally viewed in terms of dollars. When its costs are low, food is taken for granted. When its costs rise, food is termed expensive.

The truth is that American agriculture has developed at a pace that makes it the envy of the world. Today, less than five per cent of the nation's population is engaged in farming. This in itself is truly remarkable, and has come about because of many reasons. Tracing agricultural development is not easy, but it is interesting.

During the coming months, a series of interesting glimpses into America's agricultural development will be published. While these studies are not intended to be a complete history of agriculture, they will give readers an insight into the heritage of that five per cent of the national population which is working hard to keep America the best fed country in the world.



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