

## “ Ely Echo Editorial

### WELY has risen like Phoenix before, unknown if there's a way to do it again

The rumor of the radio station closing had been in the wind for awhile now. We had inquired if it was available and took a hard look at whether or not we could turn it around.

Then the announcement came out on Wednesday, "Barring an 11th-hour deal being struck for someone to buy WELY - End of the Road Radio, the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa will close the station on June 1, 2022."

The first thought that came to mind was Ely should send a massive thank you note to the Band for all they did to keep it open. For 17 years the bills were paid, paychecks were cashed and the airwaves were filled with a signal from downtown Ely. But after \$1.7 million in expenditures, the Band made the decision they rightly could have made years ago and announced the closure.

Taking a look back, WELY teetered on the edge of financial solvency many, many times over the years including being off the air for months at a time in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was rescued by the deep pockets of Charles Kuralt and later Janice Erickson took over ownership.

In 2005, the stations were purchased by the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa. For 17 years the AM and FM stations remained on the air despite a declining advertising base and competition from two newspapers, a shopper and numerous other media entities. The pie was sliced so thin there were times it was a minor miracle any business selling ads was able to make payroll.

Did Charles Pearson foresee all of this when he started WELY in 1964? How about

when Brad and Jeanne ran it on a shoestring, doing all the work themselves? Again, the owners over the years should be thanked for their contributions to the community because they certainly didn't rake in huge profits.

Our phone rang numerous times after word came out officially on the radio station's impending closure. There was a common question: Would the Echo consider buying it?

We did strongly consider it and spent a lot of time pouring over numbers, talking to current and former employees, and checking with business owners on what their thoughts were.

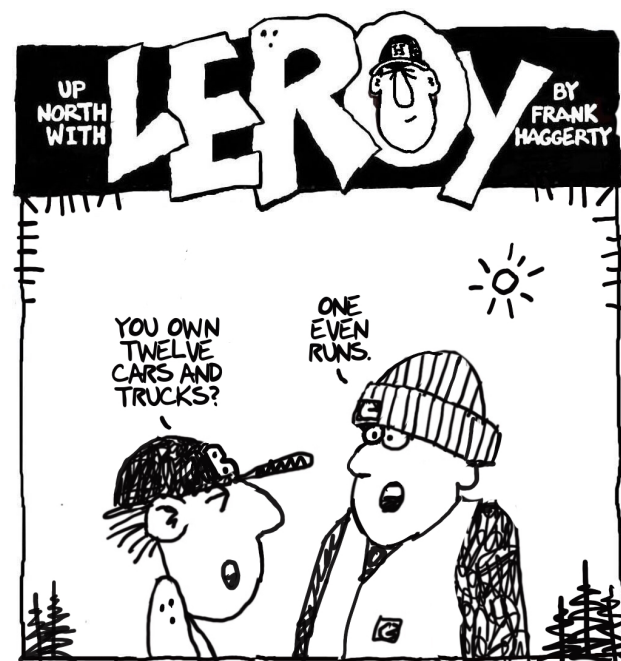
Here's what we sent to Bois Forte:

"We interviewed current and former employees of WELY, we looked at making format changes and reducing overhead along with increasing advertising revenue. Each one of these comes with a risk and even though we believe we have the right people to operate the station, there weren't enough pros to balance out the cons..."

"While we believe WELY is an asset to the community, it is a business that has struggled mightily over the years. Thanks to Bois Forte for providing the funding to keep the station on the air during your many years of ownership. The community owes you a debt of gratitude for what you have done."

In the announcement sent out, it said, "Bois Forte will seek approvals from the FCC to retain its licenses for up to a year while the station is off the air and the Band is searching for a buyer."

Could there be a way to keep WELY on the air? Possibly. One time will tell.



## Letters to the Editor

...A large amount of hydrogen is required to generate just a small amount of energy

Letter to the editor:

We have many pundits touting one thing or another and a political party that is constantly lurching from one absurd idea to another regarding energy and the environment. Biden's leader of the climate carnival, John Kerry, the epitome of an environmental charlatan that Newsweek calls a climate con man, is telling everyone what to do to save the world while his carbon footprint is over 30 times that of working-class citizens.

Locally, Gerry Snyder opines about climate change which is a change from four years of railing on Trump's fiscally policies. How ironic that Gerry is no longer pontificating about federal government fiscal responsibility and Biden's economic genius with the democrats run-a-muck spending spree inflating the cost of everything.

Liberals and democrats tell a one-sided whole story about "green energy" because solar power and wind energy are environmentally unfriendly when one looks into the real costs and massive environmental damages caused by those industries. For example, democrats are not talking about millions of birds, including raptors like bald eagles, killed every year or the near extinction of some migratory bats by wind turbines. Birds that fly over solar farms get incinerated while in flight. Very green indeed!

Democrats transitioned from global warming to 'climate change' so they could point fingers at everything to promote more climate alarming. Promoting hydrogen fuel cells is the latest salvo with suggestions that it is the next silver bullet in the climate change alarmist's arsenal of ideas.

Populists and short-sighted politicians promotion of hydrogen mobility and the promise of even more billions of subsidy into the further development of hydrogen cars pretend how savvy and involved with the environment they are, but what they are eager to forget (conceal) is that hydrogen is a backwards and utterly superfluous technology for cars. Sure, hydrogen is the most abundant element in the universe, but is not energy of itself and has to be created to have energy carrier potential.

You'd think hydrogen would simply be made by splitting water (H<sub>2</sub>O) into hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>) and oxygen (O), but this proves too inefficient, so about 95 percent comes from fossil fuels,

mostly natural gas, a process which creates carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide that needs to be sequestered in underground aquifers by the millions of tons and makes the environmental friendliness argument pointless. A very large number of environmental burdens result from the operation of different hydrogen production methods that democrats chose to ignore.

Hydrogen costs more energy than it will generate when reversed in the fuel cell (six units of coal energy are needed to produce one unit of hydrogen energy). As a result, a hydrogen car will not be environmentally friendly until the energy is generated from nuclear electric generation. Hydrogen collection from bio mass reactors is decades away from any kind of reality. Solar and wind power could be a more benign way of creating hydrogen but they have significant environmental drawbacks of their own that need more exposure.

A large amount of hydrogen is required to generate just a small amount of energy. As a result, cars would need huge tanks with hydrogen or they'd have a very short range between fuel stops, requiring an extensive network of hydrogen fuel stations. These \$100,000 cars have only 300-mile capabilities under ideal conditions. Liquid hydrogen fuel would be the equivalent of \$16/gal gas.

Maybe hydrogen as an energy carrier will be useful in the future and could possibly be used to store wind and solar energy, but is decades away from any realistic use for cars. Automakers have already invested billions of dollars into the research for hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, which makes it a very difficult decision to admit they have run into a dead end. They'd rather continue making the public believe hydrogen mobility is only a decade away, as they already have been saying for over 15 years now, and making us believe their brand is a technology leader, than to admit they have poured billions into a bullshit technology that will stay the fuel of the future, forever!

Sure, science has made things that seemed impossible, possible many times before, but it will take a few more decades and another handful of billions in order for hydrogen mobility to become possible, if ever. No wonder fuel cells are also named "fool cells."

Mike Banovetz  
Ely, MN

### POLITICAL LETTERS POLICY

The Ely Echo welcomes letters to the editor. All letters must be signed in order to be considered for publication. Political letters supporting or opposing candidates are considered advertising and will be charged regular advertising rates if accepted for publication. Political candidates are urged to contact the Echo's advertising department to set up their advertising plans as early as possible.

NOTE: Political letters to the editor will be printed in the Ely Echo prior to the primary and general election. Keep under 250 words, mark as: Political Letter and email to: elyecho@aol.com. One per letter writer.

### ...their proposal to entirely eliminate the Social Security income tax will have an oversized benefit for the richest

To the Editor:

Minnesota currently has a \$9.25 billion budget surplus, a low state unemployment rate, and increasing corporate profits, all indicators the state has recovered strongly from some very challenging days during the low point of the pandemic. Still, significant difficulties remain for workers and families, especially costs that continue to rise. Minnesotans notice higher prices at the grocery store and at the gas pump daily, and are paying more for major expenses like health care, child care, and housing.

House DFLers are taking the opportunity our surplus gives us to develop a tax plan strengthening the way of life for workers, families, and seniors, especially those who have been working harder, but seeing their dollar not go as far due to high costs and wages that while rising, aren't keeping up.

Considered in totality, the proposals in the plan represent the largest property tax cut in the last 20 years. House DFLers are expanding the Homestead Credit and reforming the Renter's Credit, resulting in

\$275 million in annual direct property tax cuts. Local Government Aid and County Program Aid increases will also help keep property taxes in check while ensuring important public services can continue, as will my legislation to increase Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) payments for counties and modernize the formula.

Our plan helps young families with a \$3,000 Great Start Child Care tax credit for each child five or younger, an increase in the Student Loan credit to \$1,400, and a \$325 child tax credit rebate for each child 17 or younger. As an example, a married couple who rents, with two kids, and earns less than \$140,000 jointly would see \$7,300 in savings, making a huge difference in a world where they're struggling with high costs.

Meanwhile, Senate Republicans have put forth a proposal tilted in favor of the richest. In fact, over 500,000 Minnesotans would see no benefit at all from the Republican proposed income tax changes. Their proposal to entirely eliminate the Social Security income tax will have an oversized benefit

for the richest. While we all want to help seniors better afford their lives, a more targeted approach — including measures to help seniors stay in their homes and assure they have access to quality health care — will give us a better bang for the buck. Under the DFL plan, no senior citizen who earns \$75,000 or less per year will pay a dime in income tax on their Social Security payments.

Don't get me wrong: I don't object to people being successful. But when middle class folks are struggling, we need to prioritize our resources where we can have the most benefit. When young families are struggling to afford child care, their mortgage payments, and student debt, Millionaires don't need a tax cut. Using such a sizable chunk of the surplus for oversized tax cuts also squeezes out investments needed to help make Minnesota schools once again world class, tackle health care costs, deliver greater investments in public safety, and other priorities to build a state that works better for everyone. This is illustrated by Senate Republicans' lack of meaningful

investment in schools this year.

We have choices to make, and our choices should be based on our shared values as Minnesotans. The value that hard work ought to be rewarded. The value that everyone deserves a fair opportunity to succeed. The value that everyone deserves access to quality health care, excellent education, and a place to call home.

To move any legislation to the governor's desk will also ultimately take a degree of compromise. Knowing this, it's deeply disappointing to see the initial proposal from Senate Republicans so tilted in favor of the very wealthiest as opposed to families, workers, and senior citizens who deserve a level playing field.

Minnesotans are counting on us to help them address a variety of rising costs. Let's make sure we're targeting the help where it would make the biggest difference for the people who need it the most.

Rep. Rob Ecklund  
International Falls

### ... It isn't possible to cut your income tax burden if you don't have one

To the Editor:

The recent tax bill by the Minnesota Senate would, among other things, cut our state's bottom rate of state income tax from 5.35 percent to 2.80 percent. Refreshingly in these politically fractured times, the bill received bipartisan backing: it got the votes of all the Republican senators, six from the DFL, and both independents.

Some of the reaction to the bill was utterly predictable. Education Minnesota, the state teachers' union, denounced it as "tax cuts for the rich." The Minnesota Budget Project, an initiative of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, claimed that "despite being described as being for all taxpayers, this proposal provides no benefit for about 1 in 5 Minnesota households." The DFL, despite six of its Senators supporting the bill, claimed that "more than half of total tax cuts go to highest-income Minnesotans."

It is true this measure would provide no direct benefit to the bottom 20 percent of Minnesota households by income. That is because, as

the Department of Revenue's most recent Tax Incidence Study shows, taken together these households pay no state income tax. Indeed, once tax credits are factored in, these households are actually net beneficiaries from the state income tax system. It isn't possible to cut your income tax burden if you don't have one.

It is also true that, in dollar terms, richer individuals will see their income tax burden fall the most as a result of this measure (specifically those in the \$150,000 to \$249,999 range). But that is because they pay a disproportionate amount of state income tax.

Looking again at the Tax Incidence Study, we see that every income decile of Minnesota households up to the eighth — that's the bottom 80 percent of households by income — earned a share of total state household income larger than the share it contributed to total state individual income tax receipts. The ninth decile broke even, earning 15 percent of total state household income and paying 15 percent of total

state individual income taxes. But the highest-earning 10 percent of Minnesota households earned 43 percent of the state's total household income and contributed 59 percent of its total individual income tax revenues (these numbers have held pretty steady over time despite different tax rates).

This is the result of a progressive tax system and Minnesota has had one of the most progressive in the country for decades. But if you create a situation where A) the lowest-earning 20 percent of households pay nothing in income tax and B) the highest-earning 10 percent pay 59 percent of the income tax, you have created a situation where it becomes very hard to cut income tax rates even for lower earners without the "the rich" getting a chunk of that relief.

But only in dollar terms. By focusing the tax cut on the lowest bracket, it applies to a larger share of income for households at the bottom of the income scale than those at the top. As a result, effective tax rates (income tax payments/income) fall