



US Army Corps
of Engineers

St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

Vol. 8

No. 10

October 1985



Photo Courtesy of the Area Research Center, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

Barge Fleeting Area May Endanger 131 Year Old Riverboat

by Dave Fink, Public Affairs

The War Eagle, 131-year-old riverboat lying at the bottom of the Black River in La Crosse, Wis., has been a part of one conflict—the Civil War. Today the War Eagle is in the center of another struggle, this time regarding its historical value and the extent to which it would be affected by a proposed dock and fleeting area for barges.

At issue is whether or not the St. Paul District should grant a permit allowing a La Crosse company to fleet 21 barges and construct a loading dock on the Black River, at a site near the War Eagle.

A concern to many residents and area historians is that the increased barge traffic may disturb the remains of the 219-foot War Eagle, which sank in the Black River during a fire in 1870.

"Under the Corps' permits program, the Corps must take into consideration cultural and historical resources which may be impacted by the issuing of a permit," said Dave Berwick, senior archaeologist with the district.

"The actual effect of the increased barge traffic hasn't been determined yet," said Henrik Strandskov, an environmental protection specialist for the district. "But the action of the towboat propellers may disturb the river bottom right where the ship lies."

In order to determine the effect of prop wash on the steamer, Strandskov said the Corps is using electronic survey equipment to pinpoint the exact depth of the War Eagle.

In August, four Corps divers—Ron Fetting, A.E. Helmueller, Rick Knopp and Robert Sikkli—investigated the wreckage and salvaged pieces of charred wood from the steamer, which sits at an angle to the riverbank in about eight feet of water.

Along with the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office, the Corps has agreed that the War Eagle is potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register for Historic Places, Berwick added.

Berwick said the next step is to request a "determination of eligibility" from the National Register, which makes the final

decision on a site's eligibility.

Although it would not necessarily stop the proposed fleeting area, the listing on the National Register would require the Corps to consider alternative measures to avoid disturbing the War Eagle or to minimize the effect of barge fleeting.

"Even if the War Eagle is not technically eligible for inclusion on the National Register," Strandskov added, "it is still of interest to the community."

Built in 1854 at a cost of \$50,000, the War Eagle carried passengers and freight to river cities between Dubuque, Iowa and St. Paul.

During the Civil War, the War Eagle was pressed into military service as it transported Union soldiers from Winona, Minn. to Prairie du Chien, Wis.

Following the war, the War Eagle returned to commercial service until the fatal night of May 14, 1870.

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Gen. Pratt Visits District



Photo by Jim Karsa

Mark Schumaker (right), project engineer, explains the Velve Flood Control Project to Gen. Pratt while touring the district.

Brig. Gen. Joseph Pratt, the new commander and division engineer for North Central Division, visited the St. Paul District on September 24-26. Gen. Pratt replaced Gen. Hilmes in August.

Gen. Pratt commented on the favorable reputation the St. Paul District has throughout the Corps.

Prior to his assignment with the North Central Division, Gen. Pratt served as the Installation Chief of Staff in Washington, D.C.

Gen. Pratt graduated from the Clarkson College in Potsdam, New York with a

bachelor of science degree in chemical engineering. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant with the Corps of Engineers in 1960. He also received a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering from the Missouri School of Mines which is now the University of Missouri-Rolla and a master's degree in engineering from Michigan State University. His military education includes the Engineer Officers Basic and Advanced courses, the Armed Forces Staff College and the Industrial College of Armed Forces.

Sheldon Fox Named to Hall of Fame



Sheldon Fox and Col. Briggs

Photo by Dale Lynch

Sheldon Fox has been selected to the St. Paul District Hall of Fame.

Sheldon who began his career with the Corps in 1960 as an electrician at Lock and Dam No. 2, retired in 1981 as the district's chief radio technician. His selection to the district's Hall of Fame was awarded during the Annual Retiree Reunion on September 8.

According to a memo from Dennis Erickson, chief of the Lock and Dam Section, Sheldon pioneered the district's radio program by establishing the first VHF/UHF radio system.

Working alone, Sheldon installed and repaired the radio equipment, modifying it to obtain a better performance. He also taught other employees how to operate and use the radios.

Combined Federal Campaign Begins

District office employees will again have the opportunity to contribute to their favorite charities through the 24th annual Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), which runs from Oct. 28 to Nov. 8.

Last year, the CFC drive collected a total of \$519,141 in the Twin Cities. The goal for this year has been set at \$640,000.

A federal employee may donate to any health or welfare charity recognized as a tax-exemption by the Internal Revenue Service. If an employee has no specific charity in mind, the donation will be distributed equally among charitable organizations.

Over the past 24 years, federal employees have donated over \$1.1 billion to charitable organizations through the CFC, according to a memo from President Reagan.

In the Twin Cities, more than 200 agencies have received CFC donations.

Ken Gardner, chief of the Public Affairs Office, is the chairman for the district's effort in the CFC campaign. For more information, contact Ken at 725-7505.

Sheldon's expertise with the radios provided a means of communication during the 1965 and 1969 flood fights on the Souris River and the Red River of the North.

He also served as an Equal Employment Opportunity counselor for ten years, helping to resolve many employee problems.

During his tenure with the Corps, Sheldon received many outstanding performance appraisals, sustained superior performance appraisals and special act awards. In 1981, Sheldon was named Field Civil Servant of the Year.

Through the many years of service, Sheldon still continues to assist others as an amateur radio operator in his community. He gives assistance to individuals in emergencies and in disasters.

Corps Works With Other Agencies to Revive Backwaters



A couple of anglers go through the rehabilitated backwaters of the Mississippi River near Fountain City, Wis.,

enjoying the scenery of the bay that has become a hallmark of the area.

Photo by Ken Gardner

by Dave Fink, Public Affairs

In the hazy, orange-red glow of an August sunrise, a great blue heron ascends gracefully from the bulrushes, while in the mirror-like water, a largemouth bass suddenly explodes from the surface.

High above the treetops, a bald eagle soars through the damp morning air, its stately wings adorned in royal plumage.

Scenes like these are not from some remote Shangri-La; they can be experienced in the Mississippi backwaters near Fountain City, Wis., an area that, just seven years ago, experienced considerable, man-induced

stagnation and could not support certain fish in the winter months.

The resurrection of the Fountain City Bay area is the result of an effort by the Great River Environmental Action Team (GREAT), a group of state and federal agencies which includes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Created in 1975, GREAT seeks solutions to river problems such as channel maintenance, navigation, fish and wildlife enhancement, historical site preservation and water quality.

In the mid 1970s, one of the problems

GREAT began addressing was the problem of stagnating backwater near Lock and Dam No. 5 north of Fountain City, Wis., said Mike Talbot, area fisheries manager for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Talbot said the stagnation in the Mississippi backwaters is often a natural process. But at Lock and Dam No. 5 much of it was man-induced after a 3.5 mile earthen dike was constructed in the 1930s as part of the Nine-Foot Navigation Project.

Running parallel to the river bank and north of the lock and dam, the dike soon prevented the main-channel water from entering into the backwaters near Fountain City, Talbot explained.

As a result, the backwater on the downstream side of the dike began to stagnate with an inadequate supply of dissolved oxygen, according to Dan Krumholz, river resource coordinator for the St. Paul District.

"The stagnation of the backwater caused a dramatic change in the species of plants," Talbot said. "Some species that require flowing water had disappeared, while plants that grow in stagnant water had flourished.

"In areas of upper Indian Creek (about a mile and a half north of Lock and Dam No. 5) many sloughs had reduced water flows," Talbot said. "The water had a low oxygen content, especially during winter when fish had to leave the area for survival."

Adding to the problem was a sewage treatment plant in Cochrane, Wis. Prior to its upgrading in 1980, the plant was discharging into the slough raw sewage laced with nutrients, promoting even more plant growth.

Recognizing the stagnation problem, GREAT recommended a three-part solution.

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**Stick
'em up!
This is a
FRAUD!**

Crosscurrents is an unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR 360-81. It is published monthly by offset for the St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Editorial views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Corps of Engineers or the Department of the Army. Deadline for submitting articles is the 10th of each month preceding publication.

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People Behind the Corps



1st Lt. Mark Eitrem

Photo by Pam Banks

After spending almost two years at the district, Mark is ready for a career change. "When I came here," Mark explained, "I had no intention of making the Army a career. I came here with the attitude that this would be a tremendous learning experience and I intended to make the most of it."

Nevertheless, Mark has enjoyed working in the district. "I have really learned an awful lot since coming here, and it's mainly due to the fine people I've worked with," he said.

Mark lives in West St. Paul. In his freetime, he enjoys many sports, including softball, football and hockey.



Sue Johnson

Photo by Pam Banks

Helping the district prepare for wartime and natural emergencies has been the main duty of 1st Lt. Mark Eitrem, who works in the Emergency Management Division.

As an assistant mobilization planner, Mark develops Project Mobilization Plans for all of the district's water resource projects and software programs, which can be used either for national and natural emergency operations.

"The work includes writing of site specific mobilization plans for the locks and dams, the headwaters dams and all flood control projects," Mark explained. "Each site must have its own plan to let the field people know exactly where they stand in the event of a mobilization."

Originally from Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., Mark is a 1983 graduate from the Lake Superior State College where he majored in geology.

After his sophomore year, Mark was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant and shortly afterwards, he joined the Michigan Army National Guard where he was assigned as an engineer bridge platoon leader. As a leader, he supervised bridge construction, demolitions and many other related engineering tasks.

Following his college graduation, Mark was stationed at Ft. Belvoir, Va. It was during that time, that Mark was offered a position with the Corps of Engineers. In June 1984, one week after the Ft. Belvoir training ended, Mark joined the Corps of Engineers at the St. Paul District.

As a six-year veteran of the Corps, Sue Johnson has made career advancement a key part of her work experience, having progressed from a seasonal secretary on a barge to her current position as personnel clerk in the district office.

Sue began to serve the Corps in the summer of 1979, working as a seasonal secretary aboard a maintenance barge stationed at Lock and Dam No. 2. In December of that year, she transferred to a secretarial position in the Foundations and Materials/Geology and Survey Branches, where she worked for more than three years.

April 1984 saw another departmental transfer, as Sue began working as a branch secretary for the Geotechnical, Hydraulics and Hydrological Engineering Branch. She served as branch secretary until July of this year, when she was promoted to a personnel clerk in the Personnel Office. As a personnel clerk, Sue process claims for worker's compensation. She also is involved with processing forms for changes in work status such as promotions, pay increases, departures, etc.

Sue finds her new position a welcome relief from her secretarial work. "After being a secretary for five years, it's nice to have a change," she said. "As a secretary, everything became too automatic." She added, "I've learned so much since I've been working at my new job, in knowing what the Personnel Office does. It's interesting to see the different functions which generate paperwork."

Sue has been able to advance in the Corps with an upward mobility position, a training agreement which allows an employee to rise through the GS-levels with appropriate experience and training.

Other training for Sue has come in the form of night classes at Inver Hills Community College, where she is working toward an associate degree in accounting.

In addition to her work in the Personnel Office, Sue is the volunteer dispersing officer for the Employees' Benefit Fund.

Raised in Cottage Grove, Sue now lives in St. Paul. During her free time, she enjoys camping, cross-country skiing, motorcycling and needlepoint.

WThe best way to keep children home is to make the home atmosphere pleasant—and let the air out of the tires."

—Dorothy Parker, author

Program Helps Students Stay in School

Photos by Pam Banks

For many young people continuing their education while working to support themselves can become an endless frustration. In the conflict between staying in school and working, the latter often wins and students leave school to support themselves.

Understanding the importance of keeping students in school, the federal government created the Stay-In-School Program several years ago. Through this program, the full-time high school and college student can work for government agencies on flexible hours that compliment with class schedules.

To qualify for the program, a student's income must fall within the levels set in the Federal Economic Guidelines. Another requirement is that the student attend school on a substantially full-time basis.

Currently, the St. Paul District has about 18 students working under the Stay-In-School Program.

The program has been very popular, Valerie Miskel, staffing assistant, said. The students are able to give clerical assistance to offices throughout the district, without it counting against the FTEs allotted to the district.

"At the beginning of each school year, the Recruitment Branch recruits at various schools and colleges in the metropolitan area to inform counselors of the program," Valerie said. "However, in the last two years, private industries have been expanding their employment to better fit the needs of the student. This has made recruiting a little more difficult."



Randy Crooms, Office of Administrative Services: "It's a good program. It's introduced me to the working world. Over the nine months that I've been in the program, I've grown to be more responsible in getting to work on time and finding my own transportation. However, I don't consider the work I'm doing for the Corps as my career, but I think the experience will help me find a job after I graduate from high school."



Joy Olson, Emergency Management Division: "I'm going to med-school and financially the program has helped me a great deal. There are several advantages to the program, such as the flexible hours that mold around my school schedule and the sick and annual leave that other firms don't offer. I also feel that through the program I have gained a mutual understanding with my bosses and co-workers. However, there is one aspect of the program that could improve and that's health benefits. Insurance policies are really expensive when a firm doesn't pay for part of them."



Chris Hack, Management Analysis Branch: "I've been in the program for almost two years. The flexible hours have really helped me to schedule the classes I need for a degree in business. But the best part of the program is the hands-on experience I have had. I've learned to deal with a variety of people, to manage myself and to budget my time."



Todd Lucey, Environmental Resources Branch: "The program has given me the opportunity to learn how an office operates. I get a chance to learn and to work with people who have more experience than I. Some of the work I have done, such as working with computers, toxic chemicals and field work, will help me in my career as a chemical engineer. Most of all, the people I work with are great. Ofcourse, the flexible hours coordinate with my schooling just perfect."



Donyel Erickson, Automatic Data Processing Center: "The program is perfect for school. I attend school in the morning, come to work for four hours in the afternoon and spend most evenings studying. The program has taught me to make better use of my time. It's also taught me to be a little more patient when dealing with people and with the government process. The best part of the program is that during school vacations, I can work full-time. I like to be able to earn my own money so I don't have to rely on my parents, plus I couldn't afford going to school if I didn't."

War Eagle

Around 6 p.m., the War Eagle had docked at the Milwaukee Road depot on the Black River wharf, loaded with 100 tons of farm implements and coal oil, a half-ton of mail and about 40 passengers. The steamer was scheduled to unload freight ticketed for La Crosse and pick up freight destined for St. Paul.

As two crewmen were repairing a leaky barrel of kerosene around 1 a.m., their lantern reportedly exploded, igniting the keg. The workers rolled the flaming barrel overboard, but instead of falling into the river, the keg landed on a barge moored next to the steamer.

Engulfing the barge and the front part of the steamer, the flames quickly spread to the War Eagle's upper decks, forcing many of the passengers to leap into the river.

The flames soon spread to the mainland, destroying wharves, warehouses, an 80-foot grain elevator, a hotel, eight freight cars and nearby railroad tracks.

In the end, the blaze killed five people and damaged an estimated \$250,000 worth

of property, making it the most disastrous fire in La Crosse history.

After the 1870 fire, the War Eagle had lain at the river bottom virtually untouched for 61 years until 1931, when the all-time low water level exposed the charred ribs of the steamer. Interest in the War Eagle has revived in the last 20 years, as numerous divers have salvaged pieces of the ship's steering equipment as well as farm implements, dishes and bottles.

In addition to their concern for the War Eagle, La Crosse residents also fear that the proposed dock and fleeting area would interfere with recreational boating, Strandskov said.

"The dock and fleeting area would be located a few hundred feet from Riverside Park, a popular recreation area," Strandskov said.

Strandskov said the La Crosse residents' opposition to the fleeting area is a factor in the district's consideration of the permit application.



Corps divers, while investigating the wreckage of the War Eagle, found pieces of charred wood from the steamer.

New Team Selected for Civil Works Directorate in Washington

The Civil Works Directorate in the Office of the Chief of Engineers in Washington, D.C., is headed by a new team of three Army officers who started their assignments in August.

The new director of civil works is Maj. Gen. Henry J. Hatch, replacing Lt. Gen. John F. Wall, Jr., who has been promoted and reassigned as commander of the U.S. Army Strategic Defense Command in Alexandria, Va. Hatch was previously assigned as the Assistant Chief of Engineers at the Pentagon.

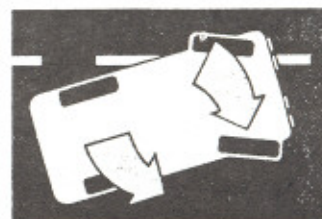
The new deputy director of civil works is Brig. Gen. Patrick J. Kelly, replacing Brig. Gen. E. Ernest Edgar III, who has been reassigned as commander and division engineer of the Corps' South Atlantic

Division in Atlanta. Kelly was previously assigned as commander and district engineer of the Corps' Mobile (Alabama) District.

The new executive director of civil works is Col. Dennis J. York, replacing Col. Michael Volpe, who has been reassigned as the Chief of Staff of the Strategic Defense Command. York previously served as commander and district engineer of the Corps' Vicksburg (Mississippi) District.

The Corps' Civil Works Directorate is responsible for comprehensive river basin planning, design, construction operation and maintenance of rivers and harbors and navigation channels and in flood control and multiple-use water resource projects nationwide.

AVOIDING SKIDS



Rainy days, fallen leaves and early morning frosts create slick pavements, making fall prime skidding weather. To avoid skidding, slow down and don't turn or brake suddenly.

If you do begin to skid:

1. Ease your foot off the gas, but don't hit the brakes, which may cause you to lose control.
2. Steer in the direction you want the front of the car to go. Don't turn the wheel too sharply or the car may fishtail.
3. When you've regained control of the car, keep your speed down. Skidding usually means you were driving too fast for conditions.

Sponsors to Finance More of Projects

The sponsor of a Corps project will soon be required to finance a greater percentage of that project, if pending legislation in Congress is passed.

The Reagan administration and Senate majority leaders have agreed on a plan in which the sponsor of a Corps flood control project would finance 25 percent of the project's cost during the period of construction, Bob Post, assistant chief of the Engineering Division said.

Previously, the percentage financed by the sponsor was usually less than 20 percent of the project's cost, Bob explained. In the past two years, the Reagan administration has tried to raise the sponsor's share to 35 percent, but recent compromises have brought the percentage to 25 percent of the construction costs.

Post said the 25 percent figure includes two areas of expense. One portion consists of the expenses the sponsor must pay in providing the Corps with necessary lands, easements, rights-of-way and relocation.

The remaining expense includes a cash payment of at least 5 percent of the project's total cost, payable during the time of construction.

If a project sponsor is unable to finance the immediate 25 percent, the locality has the option of borrowing funds from the federal government, Bob said. However, the project sponsor must then be responsible for 35 percent of the project's costs, including the lands, easements, rights-of-way, relocation costs and the 5 percent minimum cash payment during the period of construction.

Post said the altered cost-sharing plan, which will probably be authorized in FY 86, is part of the Reagan administration's goal to have a project's beneficiary assume a greater share of the project's cost.

With the new plan, he explained, the government feels it is providing assistance only to localities that show a true need for it.

"In the past, the government has felt that it has paid a greater share of a project's cost than necessary," he said.

Sponsors contacted in the district generally believe that their new cost percentage is fair, he added.

"Before the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works will recommend a project to be funded for construction, the sponsor must agree to the cost-sharing plan and give the Corps assurances that the sponsor is capable of raising funds to finance a project," he said. "The city is allowed to collect the revenue in a way they deem appropriate, such as general revenue bonds or special assessments."

One example of how cost sharing works is the expansion of a tunnel and channel at Bassett Creek, which flows through west Minneapolis and several suburbs. The total cost of the Bassett Creek project is estimated to be \$37.7 million. With the new funding formula, the federal government finances an estimated \$29.0 million while the local sponsor is projected to fund \$8.7 million.

District Tests the New EOC

An inhouse mobilization exercise, ROYALE CASTLE, was held in the district's new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on September 18. The St. Paul District's Command Post Exercise tested and evaluated the personnel on the EOC procedures and mobilization preparedness requirements for future mobilization exercises.

The exercise also tested the adequacy of space and equipment in the new center, the district's EOC Standard Operating Procedures and the staff's knowledge of the district's mobilization plans.

ROYALE CASTLE provided the district with an opportunity to prepare for two upcoming national emergency exercises.

The first exercise, PORT CALL/MOBEX 86, will be part of the Joint Chiefs of Staff/

Department of Army exercise. PORT CALL involves all branches of the service and some civilian agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Transportation, the Office of Personnel Management and other state agencies.

The second, PRESENT ARMS 86, is an exercise to test the Corps of Engineers Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). The plan provides the procedures that are to be implemented in the event of a hostile attack and relocation out of a high risk area is necessary for Corps personnel and their families.

Dates for the two exercises have not been released because of security classifications.



**VETERANS
DAY
11 NOV.**

Backwaters

The first two projects were completed in 1976. Rock fill was added to a nearby slough area to help reduce the amounts of water and sand going into the backwater. This slowed down the rate of natural aging for the slough.

In the same year, the Corps installed a closing dam at a side channel which reduced the amount of sediment flow entering the Fountain City Bay area.

But the important part of the project was the placement of three culverts in the dike in 1978. The six-foot diameter culverts allowed a continuous flow of fresh water from the main channel into Fountain City Bay.

The effects of the river improvement on the 2500 acres of backwater have been dramatic.

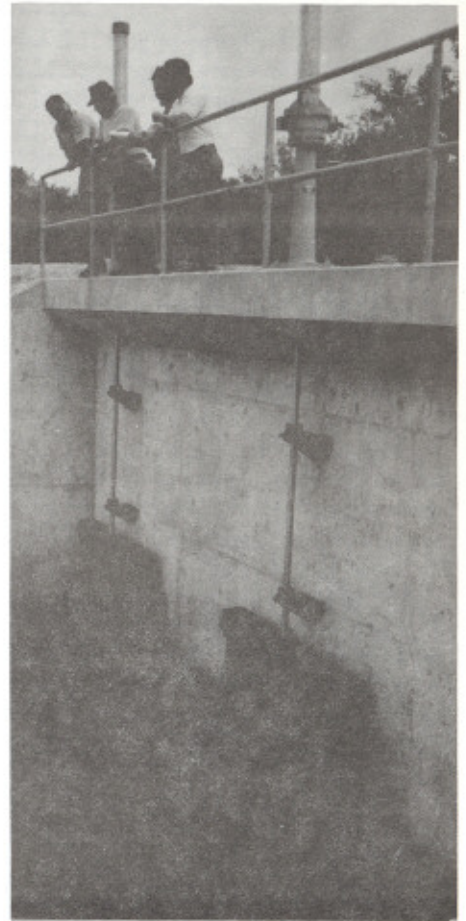
Talbot said that over 60 species of fish now inhabit the waters all year long. In addition to the teeming aquatic life, Talbot said the area is an excellent site for observing songbirds, shorebirds and waterfowl.

To maintain the beauty and accessibility of the backwaters area, Talbot said the area is managed by a "team of personnel" from GREAT, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Corps.

"The state of Wisconsin claims ultimate jurisdiction on the land in the area, but in almost all cases, it is part of a team effort to manage the area," he said.

Talbot said in the future, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources plans to recommend changes in water flow to minimize erosion of stream banks.

The Corps' work in the area, according to Krumholz, will include making recommendations to rip-rap the shoreline about 100 feet downstream from the culverts.



Dan Krumholz (right), river resource coordinator, and officials from the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, inspect the culvert structure which provides fresh water to the Fountain City Bay backwater. *Photo by Ken Gardner*



Unless you live in Arizona, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Indiana's northwest corner or a foreign country, you'll be setting your clock back an hour on Sunday, Oct. 27. (The official "set back" time is 2 a.m.) But if a bill Congress is considering this year passes, next year you can wait until after Halloween.

Charcoal briquette manufacturers like the idea, claiming they will sell \$56 million more of their product. Farmers think extending daylight-saving time would be a hardship, shortchanging them of morning daylight to do chores. Parents of young children like the idea of more evening light at Halloween, but don't like the idea of their children waiting for early morning buses in the dark.

Daylight-saving time has long been a subject of controversy in the United States, and the bill being considered this year — which would also begin daylight-saving time at the end of March — is not the first such proposal. Similar bills extending daylight-saving time were introduced in 1976, 1981 and 1983, but didn't become law. In past years, daylight-saving time has been extended only for energy-saving purposes — during both world wars, during the entire year of 1976 and for eight months in 1975.

Thanksgiving

Nov. 28, 1985

