Bi-State Bus Tax Imperiled

by Fred W. Lindecke

St. Louis legislators said yesterday that St. Louis County's threat to cut off bus subsidy revenue for Bi State Transit could complicate efforts to renew the tax that supports bus service here.

Bi State, which carries 250,000 passengers a day, is seeking legislation renewing the legal authority for levying a ¼-cent sales tax that helps maintain the service.

Sen. John E. Scott, D-St. Louis, who will handle the Bi State bill in the 1979 session of the Missouri Legislature, said that the action taken by Supervisor Gene McNary of St. Louis County and supported by the county Council would tend to solidify opposition to the sales tax renewal.

McNary, a Republican, announced Tuesday that the Democratic-controlled Council would repeal the ordinance through which bus subsidy revenue had been appropriated to Bi State if the bus line did not rescind a 15-cent fare increase and reduce its budget.

If the threat is carried out, Bi State would lose about $19 million in revenue. This could lead to a shutdown of bus service early in January, Bi State officials have said.

"If McNary continues his decision to Bi State of what its policies should be, this would tend to solidify opposition from St. Louis County legislators," Scott said. "And black legislators tend to oppose the tax renewal bill because they claim Bi State discriminates in hiring. We've got problems."

Two black senators from St. Louis, Owen B. Otto and J.B. (Jet) Banks, both Democrats, said that they agreed with McNary's complaint that Bi State's hourly was inflated.

Banks, who has opposed extension of the authority tax the bus subsidy tax in past sessions, said that he would talk that position in the General Assembly session that begins in January.

Mrs. Otto said that she did not understand how McNary could complain that the county has no voice in Bi State policies, because three of Missouri's five members on the Bi State Commission are from St. Louis County. But she said that McNary was on useful political ground in questioning Bi State operations.

"It's the only way he can be responsive to people in the county who pay the bus subsidy tax," she said.

The state law that permits a bus subsidy tax to be collected in St. Louis and St. Louis County expires on Dec. 31, 1979. The Legislature has renewed it twice for two year periods since it was first collected in 1973.

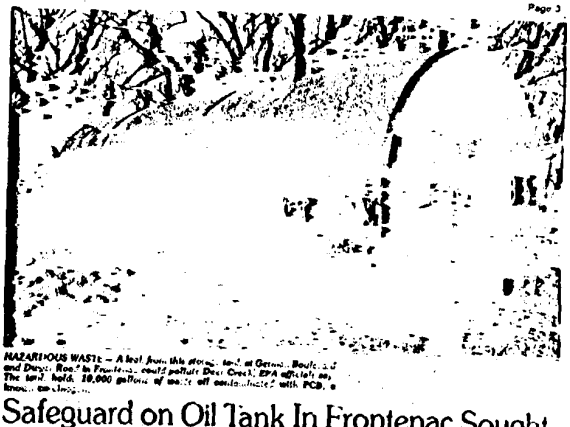
But each time the renewal bill has come up in the Legislature, St. Louis County legislators have accused Bi State of poor service in the county and black legislators from St. Louis have charged it with discrimination in hiring blacks.

Bi State and its supporters have beaten these attacks each time, but there is consistent fear that some year the bill will not pass. Kansas City, which finances its buses with the same type of tax, insists that a separate bill dealing only with the Kansas City bus line be moved toward passage simultaneously in the event that the joint bill covering both St. Louis and Kansas City fails.

McNary has joined in a St. Louis-Kansas City urban mass legislative program that calls for renewal of the taxing authority. But this legislative package also calls for McNary and Mayor Jean Conway to be able to submit nominees for appointment to the Bi State Commission.

Presently, the governor of Missouri appoints five Missouri members to serve with five Illinois members. McNary contends that this has left St. Louis County with no influence on Bi State policies, and he says that five line is not serving county residents, even though they pay one third of Bi State's income.

The announcement that Bi State would be cut off from county tax revenue was the county's response to a decision by the Bi State Commission on Monday to raise fares in Illinois and the county to 60 cents, effective next Monday. The commission said that the fare increase was necessary because Illinois and the county had failed to give the bus line sufficient financial support ...



HAZARDOUS WASTE – A leak from this storage tank at Ground Boulevard and Dwyer Road in Frontenac could pollute Deer Creek, EPA officials say. The tank holds 10,000 gallons of waste oil contaminated with PCB, a known cancer-causing ...

Safeguard on Oil Tank In Frontenac Sought

by J. Pullire:

The Environmental Protection Agency is acting to compel the Russell Bits Drum Oil Service Co. to install safeguards against possible spills from a storage tank in Frontenac. The 10,000-gallon tank holds waste oil contaminated with polychlorobiphenyl by phenols (PCBs), a substance that has been shown to cause cancer in test animals, EPA officials said.

The tank is near Conway Boulevard and Dwyer Road. Officers of the Bits firm would not comment on the allegations.

The EPA has scheduled a hearing Dec. 7 at 10 a.m. at the Civil Courts Building in St. Louis at which the Bits must explain why it has no plans for spill prevention and for countermeasures, such as dikes, to contain spills. Such safeguards are required under the Federal Clean Water Act to keep dangerous substances from contaminating water supplies.

Dan Shiel, a staff attorney from EPA's regional office in Kansas City, said that the firm must submit such emergency plans or face fines of up to $5,000 for each violation.

EPA officials said they had been aware of the problem since April 1977, when inspection visited the site. The officials were uncertain where the waste oil came from, or how it was contaminated with PCBs.

Shiel said the agency's enforcement action was based only on containment provisions of the Clean Water Act, and did not consider the separate hazard of the carcinogenic PCBs.

Officials said an EPA analysis of the waste oil indicated PCBs amounting to about 56 parts per million, well below the agency's planned legal standard of 500 parts per million for defining a hazard. But a proposed change in the regulations would lower that standard to 50 parts per million, officials noted.

At this point, however, the agency cannot take action on the suspected cancer causing agents in the oil, officials said.

But the PCBs are a major concern to Frontenac city officials and residents, said David Wilson, director of the Coalition for the Environment here.

Wilson said his group had received several calls from area residents asking about the tank and its contents. Frontenac officials also have begun legal action to force removal of the oil.

"Russell Bits has a history of inappropriate disposal of waste materials in the area," Wilson said. "The coalition has dealt with him on several occasions. We believe the Missouri Department of Natural Resources has the authority to force Bits to remove these wastes. We would hope also that they would investigate the possibility of criminal prosecution."

A list of 100 sites recently investigated by EPA officials includes three others in Missouri, the nearest a former U.S. Army chemical plant at Weldon Spring in St. Charles County.

EPA officials said the Weldon Spring site, which the Army closed nine years ago, is still dangerous because low level radiation detected there could contaminate surface and ground water sources nearby.

Other dangerous wastes are stored at a disposal site operated by Commercial Chemical Co. of Kansas City at the confluence of the Missouri and Blue Rivers, EPA officials said.

The facility, established in 1950, handles waste fluids from steel manufacturing and other substances, including acids and cyanide solutions, chromium, nickel sludges, asbestos and "pickle liquor" from nearby steel mills, officials said.

Press Talks Continue

Talks between the Post-Dispatch and nine unions that are negotiating jointly on salaries and fringe benefits were scheduled to resume today after a full day of negotiations yesterday.

Talks between the company and striking pressmen over staffing in the pressroom – the issue that prompted the current strike – were also held yesterday and were to be resumed sometime today.

There was no word on whether any progress had been made in either set of talks. Michael O'Reilly, mediator with the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service, said he had asked all participants in the negotiations to make no comment on the progress or substance of the negotiations.

Traditionally, news black-outs during negotiations are a positive sign. They are often imposed when both parties are close to a settlement and there is concern that a misinterpretation of a statement could torpedo further progress.

Two teams of company negotiators were involved in yesterday's negotiations, O'Reilly said, with one team talking to the pressmen and another with the nine unions involved in joint bargaining. The pressmen are also part of these joint talks and had a representative present at them, O'Reilly said.

The talks yesterday started at 10 a.m. at the FMCS office in Clayton. The joint bargaining talks ended at 10:30 p.m. The talks with the pressmen resumed around midnight.

[Scars] *It's almost holiday guest time!*

Have the carpeting in any two rooms professionally "deep cleaned"

(each valid only) $59.95

Have your carpets "deep cleaned" with powerful steel extraction system. No excess heat to damage carpets when experienced technicians using equipment to carpet as fine grade as Scotchgard™ and carpet backing. Soil and residue are then extracted at high velocity so carpet dries faster, and stays clean longer than with simple "surface" cleaning.

- No heat, no moisture to your home to damage or cause furniture
- All dirt, soil, and attracted soil are pulled back to the surface with, and above, all on your floor
- Also available: in home drapery and upholstery cleaning. Scotchgard™ brand carpet and fabric protector. Odor Eliminator

Ask about Scars Credit Plans!

1 (314) 432-5511

Illinois residents call collect

Satisfaction guaranteed, or money back!

[Scars] Cleaning Service

MUNS 007712

Judge

From Page 1

he had previously represented Kauffmann.

Before the attorney's testimony, the committee made public a staff report that said that the $50,000 bounty offered by Sutherland might have motivated King's convicted assassin, James Earl Ray.

But the committee staff added that it had been "unable, 10 years later, to show a direct link between either Mr. Kauffmann or Mr. Sutherland, and the events in Memphis," where King was killed on April 4, 1968.

However, the report went on, the committee "did determine that they met the necessary criteria for being considered participants in a serious conspiracy, to wit: They had the motive in Mr. Sutherland's asserted racial politics and economic attitudes and Mr. Kauffmann's readiness to earn money, legally or illegally.

"They had the monetary means," the committee report continued. "Both Mr. Sutherland's own funds, and funds from of associates. And they actively sought an opportunity to carry out their objectives, as evidenced by their alleged solicitation of at least Mr. Byers."

The staff said that it had found no evidence to counter Byers claim that he refused the contract on King's life. But it said that there were at least four possible links between Ray and Sutherland or Kauffmann.

Chief staff investigator Edward Evans told the committee that he had difficulty in investigating one of the theories – that Ray learned of the offer at the Grapevine Tavern at 1982 Arsenal, which his brother, John Larry Ray operated. Evans met with "a lot of hostility" from residents of the neighborhood who were former patrons of the bar, he said.

"Doors were put upon investigators," and "doors slammed in their faces." In the south St. Louis neighborhood, Evans testified. "Their attitude was definitely anti-black."

Some told him that "there was an atmosphere of jubilation at one get together shortly after the assassination" and that no one was "greatly disturbed" by King's death.

Randall and Weinrich followed Byers to the witness stand during a day of dramatic testimony about the role that right-wing hatreds in St. Louis may have played in the assassination. The committee will hear testimony today from Jerry Ray and on Friday, from John Larry Ray, both considered possible co-conspirators with their brother.

All of the witnesses yesterday appeared before the committee under subpoena. In return for his testimony, Byers was granted immunity from prosecution. He was guarded by four federal marshals, and the committee banned the use of cameras and tape recorders during his and Randall's appearances at their requests. Security at the hearing has not been so tight since James Earl Ray appeared last summer.

Although the broad outlines of the scheme that Byers claims to have been solicited to have been reported in the *New York Times*, and the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, Byers had not testified publicly previously. An attorney by his attorney, James Hamilton of Washington, to force the committee into closed session indicated that he was uncomfortable speaking openly even with the immunity.

Byers, a convicted felon and a former vending company operator, was relaxed during his appearance and joked frequently about his criminal activities. He told the committee that he and Kauffmann had become acquainted in the late 1950s and that he had stored stolen cars and other property at Kauffmann's Bluff Acres Motel in Bamfield, Mo. in the mid-'60s.

In about the spring of 1967, Byers said, Kauffmann asked him whether he wanted to earn $50,000. When he said yes, Kauffmann took him to Sutherland's farmhouse, which was decorated in a Confederate motif. Sutherland told Byers that a conservative Southern group would pay him $50,000 if he murdered, or arranged the murder of, King. Byers said that he had never heard of King until that time.

Byers said that he "sort of crawfished a bit" and later refused the offer. He himself had a "relationship with Kauffmann soon afterwards because he found out that Kauffmann" was dealing in illegal drugs." he said.

"I figured it's time for me to leave when he's wanting me to kill somebody and he's involved with drugs," Byers said.

He said that he never reported the offer to the FBI because he "didn't want to get involved" because of his other criminal activities."

Byers was questioned closely by several committee members about whether he had ever discussed the offer with anyone else, including his brother-in-law, John Paul Spica, who served three with James Earl Ray in the Missouri State penitentiary.

Byers and Randall denied ever discussing the offer with anyone besides his two attorneys, but later said he might have discussed it on numerous occasions after King was shot.

He said that he did not know which of his friends had informed the FBI in 1973 of the contract offer.

"It could have been any one of a thousand people I told it to," he said. "When you drink, you talk, and you don't know what you're saying. Evidently, I told this story to someone I was talking to, whom I don't now remember."

However, Randall says that Byers told him the informant was Richard O'Hara, one of his partners in crime. Randall told the committee in a letter on Nov. 3 that he believed that Byers might have concocted the story and told it to O'Hara to determine whether O'Hara was an informer. If the FBI had questioned Byers about the offer, then he would have known that O'Hara was a stool pigeon, Randall said he reasoned.

But Byers said that the FBI had never interviewed him on the subject and denies knowing the identity of the informant. The committee did not attempt to straighten out discrepancies between his testimony and Randall's.

Randall provided the committee with a great deal of entertainment during his testimony. He told the committee that it had cost Missouri $25,000 to relieve him of his duties so that he could testify. He regaled members with unsolicited details about his early days as a struggling lawyer, and frequently overruled his own attorney, Hallon Reed, Jr., of St. Louis, when Reed tried to silence his discussion of other clients.

Throughout his testimony, Randall tried to put distance between himself and Byers, arguing that he never knew him well. He said that he did not charge Byers a fee on the day that Byers told him of the assassination offer and that he regarded it as "a wholly trade-it event."

"He had me cornered, and it was all free advice," he said. "He wanted to know how to get immunity and he was concerned about the publicity."

Committee investigator Evans indicated that the staff was trying to obtain the notes of the late Theodore C. Link, a former *Post Dispatch* reporter, who Evans said told a St. Louis County detective in the early 1970s of a rumor that Byers and an unidentified lawyer had been involved in an offer to kill King.



PLOT HATCHERY: This building at Arsenal Street and Illinois Avenue in south St. Louis once housed the Grapevine, a tavern where a plan to assassinate the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King may has been discussed.

News Photo / Jim Rice

Evans said that the note, could indicate whether the detective contacted the FBI, which would mean that the FBI had evidence of the $50,000 offer well before the informant reported it in 1973. The 1973 FBI report on the informant apparently was never investigated because it was misfiled until last spring.

No Respect: Even Clayton Gets Lice

Even the St. Louis area's most prosperous communities have not escaped the current outbreak of head lice. The spread of lice through the area's schools has reached epidemic proportions, say school and medical authorities.

"It is everywhere," said George Fairgrieve, principal of Meramec School in Clayton. "Every school in Clayton has it, and every school district has it."

His own school had 15 children with lice last week, he said, adding, "I'd like to know the school that doesn't."

Dr. John Murphy, the St. Louis County Department of Community Health and Medical Care, confirmed that head lice have been reported throughout the county.

The problem seems to be worst in the south county. It began as far this year among children in St. Louis, Maplewood-Richmond Heights and Affton.

The louse problem is more of a nuisance than a serious health threat, Murphy and Fairgrieve said. That's small comfort to those who have it, they said.

Moreover, the itching that results from lice can result in infections if a person scratches too vigorously.

Those who get lice are treated with special shampoos and a fine steel tooth comb.

Parents are urged to wash their children's clothing and to spray furniture and other household items that might harbor the vermin.

Businessman Shot To Death

St. Louis homicide detectives are searching for the killer of Emanuel Bryant, president of the Esquire Music Shops in north St. Louis.

Bryant, 43, of 690 Cree Creek Crest Court was found about 6:45 a.m. yesterday slumped across the seat of a 1978 Cadillac parked in the 2800 block of Norwood Avenue. He had been shot in the head several times.

St. Louis NEWS

is available at
news stands throughout
the City and County
and in
MAJIK MARKETS
7-11 STORES
SWITWAY STORES

News dealers wanting
to carry St. Louis News
can call Triangle News at:
991-2858
869 2030
892-1686

Advertisers wanting to
advertise can call:
361-8907

MONS 007713