

Sterling Munro—region's saddle-sore Paul Revere

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PORTLAND (UPI) — The man riding over hill and dale with the biggest warning in the Pacific Northwest is Sterling Munro.

The message from the man with the Hollywood sounding name is short and to the point — "The energy shortage is coming!"

"Having sounded this warning to every northwest village and farm, and not just once, I am beginning to feel like a saddle-sore Paul Revere," says Munro, who is the Bonneville Power Administrator.

"We no longer enjoy an abundance of energy — especially inexpensive electric energy," is the basic underlying message he gives in every nook and cranny where he's asked to speak. He probably is the busiest public speaker in the region, and demand for his message runs high.

While he is repetitious, repititious, repetitious, with his basic theme, he doesn't want to overkill his warning with sameness of approach, lest he put his audiences, or the public, to sleep in the middle of the growing crisis, which, as George Orwell's novel had predicted, might come in 1984.

Munro keeps the message refreshing with humor and analogies to get going, then gets heavy with the serious part.

Not only has he done the saddle-sore Paul Revere approach, he's also borrowed from a hundred or more things familiar to get one's attention . . . such as poetry, the visions of Emile Zola, 20 Questions, football strategy, the World Series, crystal balling or anything else that lends to the concepts of his listeners.

For instance, he spoke to the Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society in Eugene the other day, and he started his message off with:

"I don't have to tell you that wishes aren't fishes and they are not horses or horsepower either. So we in the Northwest aren't fishing as much as we would like, and we no longer enjoy that abundance of energy — especially inexpensive electric energy — that enable economic fulfillment and parity for this region a few decades ago."

To the University of Washington Conference on Environment in Seattle, he said:

There is a wonderful quotation from Emile Zola set in fine Italian tile above the main entrance of Seattle City Light. It's about electricity, and it says: "That man may use it freely as the air he breathes, the waters of the river, the winds of heaven." That was one frenchman's view of social equity in the distribution of electric energy almost 100 years ago, and that sentiment is very much like that expressed in the Bonneville Power Act of 42 years ago. But times change. Many now do not think electricity should be either cheap or abundant, mainly due to a necessary concern for the condition of air we breathe and water

of the rivers. Clean air is not free and quality of the air and water in the rivers has become an increasingly costly national concern. So far as I know, Zola's winds of heaven' don't yet have a price tag, but will when we start harnessing the winds to windmills."

To the Electric Club of Oregon at Portland, he played Johnny Carson's Karnak the Magnificent routine, which starts with the answer and Karnak providing the question:

"The answer to the question is 'the regional power bill' (a new approach to allocation of power to public and private users). Happily, it is alive, although it has not yet passed its final hurdle in the US house of representatives. There is some argument, however, as to whether it is—as in the game of 20 questions— animal, vegetable or mineral."

To the Council for Washington's Future, in Seattle, he came on like Paul Revere, a saddle-sore one at that. "The Redcoats of then are the shortages of now—coming by both land and sea. Those by land are the slippages in construction schedules for thermal power projects that will come on line years after their originally planned startup dates. The shortages by sea, so to speak, relate to the incapability of hydro to keep pace with the region's growing demand for electricity."

He crystal balled it to the Seattle Federal Executive Board, saying:

"Some folks think BPA and the region's utilities need a new crystal ball. So do I. Or at least we need to shine up the old one. Most folks who think our crystal ball does not let us see the future clearly enough think our forecasts of future electric demand are on the high side. We won't really know until we get there if our forecasts of the future demands are too high. I think the forecasts of deficits in the event of a critical low water year may be on the low side. The forecasts show there will be serious power shortages in the region in any year in the '80s in which streamflows are low. And in the year of greatest shortage, 1984, the potential shortages loom as large as the equivalent of the output of three big thermal power plants."

Pause time to think over all these things that Munro has said, and all he asks is that you "get the message," and prepare for the future.