

Clippings

THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 1972

York Company Gets North St. Bridge Job

A \$979,700 contract for the construction of a temporary bridge over the Susquehanna River at North Street was awarded on Wednesday to a York firm.

Three bids were received for the project and were opened by Jacob Kassab, Secretary of Pennsylvania Department of Transportation at commissioners' meeting room at the courthouse.

Seated next to Kassab was John Volpe, Secretary of the U. S. Department of Transportation, and Congressman Daniel J. Flood.

Successful bidder was G. A. and F. C. Wagman, Inc., of RD 5 York.

Bids also were submitted by No. 1 Contracting Corporation, West Pittston, \$1,489,600, and B. G. Coon Construction Co., Luzerne, with \$1,153,683.

PennDOT had estimated the project would cost \$870,000. Volpe called George Fenton, division engineer for the U. S. Bureau of Highways in Pennsylvania, over to the table and asked him how the bids compared with the estimate. Fenton replied that the low bid was about 12½ percent above the estimate. He explained that normally he would have to refer the bids to his superiors. Sec. Volpe laughingly replied, "I think I can approve 12½ percent."

Kassab said "I just happen to have a pen," and Volpe, taking the pen, said "I am delighted to sign."

The federal official said that the U. S. government is funding 100 per cent both the temporary and the permanent spans.



(Photo by J. J. Sharaba)

OFFICIALS CONFER—Officials are shown on Wednesday with Congressman Daniel J. Flood during special ceremony to award contract for construction of a temporary span over the Susquehanna River at North Street. Picture was taken shortly before the congressman was stricken ill.

From left are: John Volpe, Secretary of U.S. Department of Transportation; Thomas Kiley, president, First National Bank of Eastern Pennsylvania; Frank Carlucci, Federal flood relief coordinator for the President; Edgar Lashford (background), representative of Chamber of Commerce, and Congressman Flood.

Highway, Bridge Repair Work Will Take 3 Years

It will take at least three years to repair all highways and bridges damaged by Tropical Storm Agnes.

This estimate was made at Wednesday's "Report to the People" conference of Frank Carlucci, flood relief coordinator, by two highway officials, John A. Volpe, U. S. Secretary of Transportation, and Jacob Kassab, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

Volpe said the highway and bridge situation is the worst problem confronting his department at present, and that this problem has to be "expedited as soon as possible." The Federal official also pointed to problems with railroads, and also indicated that a mass transportation system has to be established on a regional basis.

Volpe, after conferring with other officials in attendance, said that damage to highways and bridges in Luzerne County has been estimated at \$10.4 million, and that this figure could be about \$175,000,000 statewide.

Kassab said that at this stage no one knows exact figures for damages. "This is an estimate period," he said, adding, "damages, statewide, could range between \$200 and \$450 million."

The state transportation official also said that his department, prior to the flood, knew that secondary roads in the state were in "bad shape." He added,



A GOOD POINT—U. S. Rep. Daniel J. Flood (D-Pa.), right, points out some problems to Transportation Secretary John Volpe during inspection of bridge washed out by flooding this June in Wilkes-Barre. Flood was stricken ill and hospitalized a short time later. (AP Wirephoto)

"The flood only brought the problem to light."

Kassab closed with the following statement, "We need more money. The Department of Transportation is busted."

Volpe commended several agencies within the Department of Transportation, including the Federal Aviation Administration, the United States Coast Guard, the Federal Highway Administration, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration and the Federal Railroad Administration, for their performances "far and beyond the call of duty."

County Engineer John Churnetski reports the Army Corps of Engineers has been requested to remove the debris, which has added a considerable amount of weight to the structure.

The county has contracted with the consulting firm of Porter and Ripa of Morristown, N. J., to do the design work for restoring the Breslau Bridge and the Water Street Bridge between Pittston and West Pittston to pre-flood conditions.

A formal report on the Water Street Bridge is scheduled to be presented to Churnetski on Wednesday, he said. The consulting firm has two men doing a profile on the structure.

Churnetski said the firm is concentrating on the Pittston span because there is no debris stuck to it and it is easy to make the survey. The firm is waiting for the debris to be removed from the Breslau Bridge to make a detailed survey.

Pre-preliminary estimates indicated it will cost about \$230,000 for the Plymouth structure and \$116,000 for Water Street Bridge, Churnetski said. Following the survey, a better idea of the costs will be available.

In making the detailed survey, Churnetski explained, scaffolding is erected to allow the engineers to get under the bridge and check each individual steel beam to see if it has been damaged or twisted to any extent.

Some of the formalities generally involved between doing a survey and drafting the design have been eliminated by the county commissioners and the engineer. They have instructed the consulting firm to do what is needed to restore the structures to pre-flood condition.

Following completion of the design, the commissioners will have to advertise for bids and then award a contract.



JOHN VOLPE

Volpe to View Span Ruins, Bids Openings

**Cabinet Member
Will Appear at
Carlucci Conference**

John Volpe, secretary of the U. S. Department of Transportation, will take part in the opening of bids for construction of the temporary North Street bridge on Wednesday.

The area's flood relief coordinator, Frank Carlucci, said Volpe will inspect the flood-ruined North Street bridge at 10:30 a. m., prior to the 11:30 a. m. bid opening at the courthouse.

Following a tour of the flood area, Volpe also will take part in the Wednesday "Report to the People" press conference.

The temporary span will be built on the site of the old bridge, which washed away June 24. Funding is being provided by the Federal Highway Administration through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

The structure is to be completed by Feb. 15, 1973, and a \$2,000 penalty will be assessed for each day beyond the deadline, it was stated.

Meanwhile, a detailed survey of the Breslau Bridge, connecting Plymouth and Hanover Township, is awaiting removal of debris from the span's superstructure.

Linda Mathews

DAY, AUGUST 29, 1972

★

Three

Transit Specialists To Expedite Public Bus System for Area

Flood Recovery Task Force, Inc., has announced that five mass transportation specialists from Urban Mass Transit Administration, Washington, have been assigned to Wyoming Valley to help expedite creation of a public transportation system to assure continued bus service in the flood devastated area.

Officials of the Task Force were advised of their assignment here by William Allison, deputy director of the UMTA, and James Costantino, regional representative of the U. S. Secretary of Transportation.

On Thursday at 10 a. m. in Luzerne County Commissioners' office, these federal specialists will meet with representatives of the Flood Recovery Task Force, PennDOT officials and the County Commissioners's newly formed committee on mass

transit to insure that every possible action is taken to develop an effective public transportation system in Wyoming Valley as soon as possible to avoid any breakdown in service between the eventual termination of free bus travel now provided by OEP and the point at which private bus firms may find they can no longer provide such service on a regular fare basis.

The five specialists being assigned to Wyoming Valley have professional expertise in financing, capital structure, research and deployment, service deployment and legal implications with backgrounds encompassing all facets of developing and maintaining a viable public mass transit system.

Expected to be in the region by this morning are Alex DellaValle, Edward Madison, James

Young, Franz Gimmler and a legal consultant.

Luzerne County Commissioners appointed the six-man mass transit committee on August 10 to explore the most practical methods of replacing the private surface transportation system now operating here. Formation of such a group became imperative in light of statements made by officials of the Wilkes-Barre Transit Company, one of two lines in local operation, that it was questionable how much longer the firm could stay in private operation even before the ravages of Hurricane Agnes.

The Urban Mass Transit Act provides federal funds for capital improvements and Penn DOT's Urban Public Transportation Division supports both capital requirements and operating subsidies for public transportation.

Bridge Bids To Be Taken To Labor Day

Final bids for the temporary North Street Bridge will be accepted before Labor Day, Congressman Daniel J. Flood reported from Washington Wednesday.

Following several conferences with Pennsylvania Department of Transportation engineers, legislator advised that PennDOT and the Federal Highway Administration had been moving at a fast pace since last week to firm proposals for the temporary span to replace the structure washed away by June Hurricane Agnes flood.

On Monday, Flood announced that he had secured a full 100 per cent federal funding for the steel and timber span, which is expected to cost in excess of \$750,000. Late last year, Flood also announced that the long planned permanent new facility would also be fully funded by the federal government.

Congressman Flood reported that PennDOT Secretary Jacob Kassab, departmental engineer Bernard Kotalik, an Ashley native, and four contractors from various sections of the state met yesterday to discuss contract procedures. Contracting firms reportedly present represented were Wagman Contracting, Nyleve Company; Reed and Kuhn, and No. 1 Contracting, both headquartered in this region.

The Congressman advised that contractors were shown preliminary bid proposals, and it was decided that final bid proposals would be available by August 25. Final bids will be accepted by August 30, after which the FHA will review the bids with reference to federal guidelines.

"It is very likely that the contract for the temporary North Street Bridge will be awarded by the end of next week, Flood said in his Washington office last night.

Completion of pier construction is slated for October 15, the Congressman noted, with a final, firm, construction completion date of February 15 of next year.

Motorists of the area will continue to be inconvenienced with the loss of the North Street Bridge for a few more months," Flood said, "but this is better than having to wait nearly two years, as planned, for the completion of the permanent new facility."

It also was reported that contractors would be advised of a planned \$2,000 per day penalty if construction is not completed by the February 15 deadline.

Flood advised that the awarding of bids, and the entire construction program will be under the direction of Penn DOT.

Bridge Construction To Start in 3 Weeks

Construction plans for the temporary North Street Bridge between Wilkes-Barre and Kingston were completed Tuesday at a Harrisburg conference of federal and state highway officials.

The temporary span, according to Harold Poulson, deputy chief highway engineer for Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, will have a grid-steel deck similar to the roadway on the Eighth Street Bridge, Wyoming.

Financing for the \$750,000 structure is being provided by the Federal Highway Administration.

Poulson said normal bidding procedures are being set aside and it should take no more than

three weeks to begin construction. A meeting of interested contractors will be held Thursday or Friday at Harrisburg, he said, and the firms will be asked to submit proposals next week.

FHA and PennDOT will review the bids as rapidly as possible, Poulson said, and this should take no more than one week as compared to the usual 30 days.

The bridge is slated to have two 12-foot wide traffic lanes and a pedestrian walkway. Those portions of the flood-damaged span still intact will be utilized.

Meanwhile, planning is underway for the new four-lane bridge to be constructed in the same area.

8/21/72
TIMES-LEADER,

Editorial Comment

Temporary Bridge Assured

Thanks to the diligent efforts of State Senators T. Newell Wood and Martin L. Murray and Governor Shapp, the Department of Transportation has announced plans to build a temporary bridge on the site of the former North Street Bridge. All that stands in the way of construction are approval by the Federal Highway Commission, which is anticipated shortly, and a contractor capable of doing the work.

About half of the old bridge still is standing. Four of the seven piers that rested on the river bed remain in place and apparently are sound. Those that have fallen will be replaced by temporary piers. According to Secretary of Transportation Jacob Kassab, the temporary structure will carry the same load limit as the destroyed bridge.

A particularly welcome aspect of plans for the temporary bridge is that it will in no way delay construction of a permanent four-lane bridge. Secretary Kassab said plans call for building of two lanes of the permanent bridge above the North Street Bridge. When they are complete, the temporary structure will be razed and work will begin on the other two lanes of the new bridge.

Traffic will continue to flow over the open lanes of the new bridge.

The anticipated opening date of the temporary bridge is February or March, which is a relatively short time period in terms of bridge building. But the sooner the work can be completed, the better, for the load on the Market Street Bridge increases daily as more and more persons and businesses return to a normal routine.

City police are doing an excellent job in controlling the bridge traffic at peak periods, but in time the load is bound to become so great that even skillful handling will not be able to prevent frequent tieups in central city. This can only work to the disadvantage of the downtown business community, which represents the economic heart of Wyoming Valley, and whose welfare is vital to the success of the rebuilding program.

For the long term, Greater Wilkes-Barre badly needs the new four-lane bridge we have been promised. For the short term, we must have the temporary bridge, and it is gratifying to know that State officials have no intention of letting red tape stand in the way of obtaining a contractor for the job.

Carlucci Assures Free Bus Service

The Federal government will continue free bus service for persons heading in and out of Wilkes-Barre, according to Frank Carlucci, special representative to the president who Monday spent his first full day studying the flood recovering program on foot and automobile.

"This service (free bus rides) will be continued until I have had an opportunity to study the situation entirely and arrive at a termination date that will be equitable to the bus companies and citizens of the area," Carlucci announced.

Informed of an apparent confusion in serving a certain area of the flood zone in Hanover Township, Carlucci yesterday assigned a top aide to clear up the difficulty.

"There is no thought of cessation of the free bus service," he commented. "Federal government is continuing its commitment."

T/H 8/15/72

County to Ask U. S. and State To Back Mass Transportation

Officials of the Office of Economic Preparedness in Washington, D. C., and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation will be contacted by the Luzerne County commissioners for support of mass transportation in Wyoming Valley and for recommendations on the future of transportation in the area.

Local transportation problems were aired at a meeting Thursday morning at the courthouse, when transportation consultants and PennDOT recommended formation of either a Transportation Authority or a Department of Transportation in the county immediately.

Recommendations were made by Ed Burkhart of PennDOT and Joseph C. Ostroski and Raymond Devereaux of the consultant firms of Bellante, Clauss, Miller and Nolan, and also Gannett, Fleming, Corddry and Carpenter, Incorporated, respectively.

North Street Bridge Status

Commissioner Chairman E. C. Wideman, Jr., reported that State Secretary of Transportation Jacob Kassab said the North Street bridge would not be ready for many, many months, possibly up to two years and the local transportation emergency would be in effect during that period.

Meanwhile, the OEP, through the Wilkes-Barre Transit Corporation and the White Transit Company, has been providing free bus service at a cost of approximately \$200,000 per month.

Burkhart reported the state could provide two-thirds the cost of operational losses under a certain type program, but could not do so in light of the fact that the operation is costing \$200,000 per month. He said there "just isn't that kind of money available."

It was decided that OEP will be asked to continue support of the free bus service. However, questions will be raised such as can the Federal, state and local governments provide one-third each, and can funds be applied if a partial fare is charged, such as 10 or 15 cents?

General Lincoln, who heads the OEP in Washington, will be asked the above questions and

the commissioners will seek the support of Mr. Kassab.

Committee Named

Commissioner Wideman named a committee of Ed Schechter, chairman; John Conyngham, Edward Heiselberg, Julius Landau, Frank Henry and Jack Holt to check into all phases of transportation, including the possible establishment of an authority or a department of transportation at the county level. Mr. Henry and

Mr. Holt represent the two bus companies; Mr. Landau, the Merchants Association; Mr. Heiselberg, the county planning commission, and Mr. Conyngham the Flood Recovery Task Force.

Others in attendance were Atty. Joseph Quinn, Thomas O'Donnell, county coordinator of Federal funds; P. J. Clarke, chief clerk to the commissioners, and Commissioner Frank Crossin and Mrs. Ethel Price.

Shapp Calls for Free Bus Service Until North Street Bridge Replaced

Governor Milton J. Shapp Wednesday demanded that the Federal Government honor a commitment to continue free bus service for citizens of Wilkes-Barre until the North Street Bridge is replaced.

Shapp accused the Federal Government of reneging on a commitment to keep the free bus service until the North Street Bridge is replaced by a new structure. He noted that the State has been advised that the service will be discontinued in the near future.

The Governor said, "the cessation of this service, which has carried tens of thousands of passengers per day, will result in strangulation of the City and impede cleanup and restoration of the entire area."

Following is the text of Shapp's letter to Gen. George Lincoln, Director of OEP:

"I am very disturbed by the decision of the Federal Government to discontinue the free bus service for the Citizens of Wilkes-Barre, which was necessitated and inaugurated as a result of the flood washing out the North Street Bridge.

"The cessation of this service, which has carried tens of thousands of passengers per day, will result in strangulation of the City and impede cleanup and restoration of the entire area.

"At a meeting of Luzerne County officials, OEP, other government officials and myself in the County Court House Building in Wilkes-Barre on July 3rd, Commissioner E. C. Wideman raised the question of replacing the North Street Bridge. He also asked that the Army Engineers construct a temporary bridge to serve until a permanent bridge could be built. This latter request proved to be impractical.

"At the same meeting, the representative of OEP stated that OEP would pick up the cost of operating a bus service until such time as a permanent bridge could be built and regular traffic service restored.

"Two weeks ago, State Transportation Secretary Jake Kassab met with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Commissioners of Luzerne County, at which time the Corps advised that the free bus service would be discontinued in the near future.

"On July 21, upon his return to Harrisburg, I instructed the Secretary to contact the Federal Office of Emergency Preparedness and advise them that free bus service would be necessary until the North Street Bridge is replaced by a new structure. Mr. Vangen of OEP assured the Secretary that such would be the case.

"I now understand that the Federal Government is going to renege on this commitment.

"Anyone who has visited Wilkes-Barre since the disaster of June, 1972, should fully realize that the emergency that existed due to the washout of the North Street Bridge will continue to exist until such time as the North Street Bridge is replaced.

"Therefore, I must demand that the Federal Government honor their commitment to con-

tinue this bus service for as long as the emergency shall exist, which is until the bridge is replaced."

In a story carried in the Times-Leader, Evening News, Record last Friday, Francis X. Tobin, regional coordinator at the time for the U. S. Office of Emergency Preparedness, announced that free bus service would be extended for an indefinite period of time.

Tobin made the statement at a transportation meeting held at the courthouse.

The Federal government is assuming the cost of the bus transportation at the rate of about \$6,000 per day.

While the latest extension was "indefinite," Tobin said at that time that would be terminated as soon as possible once the local transportation problems are solved.

Transportation Unit Urges Creation of Crisis Center

The Bridges, Roads and Transportation Subcommittee of the newly formed Community Recovery Task Force Inc., has urged creation of a "Transportation Crisis Center" in Wyoming Valley which will house both federal and state highway and bridge construction officials in the same local office.

Fuctioning as part of a broad-based citizens group which will be a permanent entity for the complete rehabilitation and recovery of the Valley's social, governmental and economic base, the transportation unit is one of more than a dozen subcommittees of the task force which have been assigned tasks in specific recovery areas such as equity restoration, local government, private educational institutions, flood control, planning and redevelopment, labor and construction, statistics, family, health and the aged; state aid and public relations.

Based in the South Franklin Street office of Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce, the recovery council includes representation from business, labor, industry, government, education, financial institutions and the professional community.

A delegation of the Bridges, Roads and Transportation subcommittee, under the direction of Edward Schechter, travelled

to Washington recently to urge appointment of a federal coordinator to expedite construction of a new North Street Bridge and the North Cross Valley Expressway, cutting through as much red tape as possible to establish these two vital highway links across the Susquehanna River.

According to Schechter, another delegation will go to Harrisburg on Wednesday to talk with Secretary Jacob Kassab and other PennDOT officials to have a state coordinator brought into the area to work closely with the federal highway coordinator at one office location in the disaster area. It was thought that these two men, and any supporting staff, would form a "Transportation Crisis Center" which could operate with maximum efficiency in rebuilding an effective surface transportation system in Wyoming Valley.

Members of the Roads, Bridges and Transportation sub-

committee assigned specific areas of responsibility in the recovery phase include Carl Schmidt Jr., Downtown Distributor; Leo Corbett, traffic flow in the entire Valley including a TOPICS program for the West Side; Edward Heiselberg, North Street Bridge; Thomas Kiley, fedderal-state coordinator; Clifford Bigelow, North Cross Expressway; and John Conyngham, Mass Transit system.

Judge Max Rosenn is serving as temporary chairman of the Community Recovery Task Force which is being incorporated under the laws of Pennsylvania.

Federal Coordinator Will Cut Red Tape on Valley's Bridge Problem

Exerting legitimate pressure to speed the opening of two vital highway links across the Susquehanna River—namely the North Street bridge and the North Cross-Valley Expressway—a delegation from the Community Recovery Task Force traveled to Washington to urge that a federal coordinator be appointed to cut through time-wasting red tape and stay with the projects until completed.

Meeting in a three-hour session, the Task Force learned from Judge Max Rosenn, temporary chairman of the recovery group, that a federal representative has since been appointed to deal with the bridge problem.

Also discussed during the meeting were such items as equity restoration, local government problems, state aid programs, proposed flood relief legislation, national news coverage to focus continuing attention on the disaster, availability of statistical data for decision making, special problems of the aging, mass transportation needs and contracting demands as homes and businesses are rebuilt.

Based in the Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce building, the Community Recovery Task Force is being incorporated as a permanent entity including representation from business, labor, industry, government, education, financial institutions and the professional community.

Purpose of the group is to maximize use of financial, ma-

terial and manpower resources of Wyoming Valley to avoid fragmentation of effort and prevent any time lag in the recovery process.

Edward Schechter, chairman of the Road, Bridge and Transportation sub-committee, briefed the task force on the meeting he attended in Washington, with Highway Commissioner David Schooley and Chamber Executive Edgar Lashford, who met with members of Pennsylvania Highway Information Association and state congressional representatives to stress the urgency of immediate work on roads and bridges linking the east and west side Wyoming Valley communities as a key factor in the whole recovery process.

Reporting on equity capital restoration, Thomas Kiley, chairman of that sub-committee, noted that he, accompanied by George Sailus, Judge Rosenn, Eugene Roth and Harold Rose, met in Washington on July 28 with Congressman Wright Patman, chairman of the House Committee on Banking and Currency, Senators Hugh Scott and Richard Schweiker, Congressman Daniel Flood and a representative from Congressman Joseph McDade's office. He explained that increases in direct grants and a program which would restore a larger percentage of personal and business property equity were the major agenda items.

Senator Martin Murray noted that Governor Shapp had de-

veloped a 10-point flood relief proposal which would be placed before the General Assembly when that body reconvenes on August 14. He further noted he stressed the need of substantially more recovery aid with administration officials in Harrisburg, urging the development of a matching fund type program with the federal government for equity capital restoration.

Gen. Frank Townend expressed concern over the Office of Emergency Preparedness' seeming reluctance to extend the free bus service now in operation beyond the August 15 contract date. It was pointed out, however, that in a meeting with the executive committee of the chamber of commerce, OEP official Francis Tobin said he would support continued free bus service "for the duration of the emergency," but would not commit his agency to the 90-day extension requested.

Gen. Townend also expressed the concern of many homeowners who are looking ahead to warm quarters during the winter and are beginning to wonder if their homes will be ready for occupancy by that time.

Regarding possible consumer fraud during the rebuilding period, it was agreed that a sub-committee of the Community Recovery Task Force be appointed to deal with complaints such as price gouging or unsatisfactory work.

eral Regional Council, hedged on one basic question involving people in the so-called flood—plain areas—namely, what's a person to do when the cost of locating elsewhere is more than that of staying put and repairing what's left?

"Specific projects must be considered under the provisions of state and federal law on a case by case basis," they said in a joint statement.

Key to the state-federal agreement is a concept known as the "100-year flood plain." Areas subject to flooding at least once every 100 years are considered within the plain.

Agreement specifies that reconstruction outside the 100-year flood plain will receive all possible state and federal assistance.

to areas beyond the 100-year plain" or "provide adequate safeguards."

Neither Kline nor Rebb were more specific about what they mean by "interim assistance" or "adequate safeguards."

New construction, under the agreement, would be ineligible for local, state or federal aid if it is built within the flood plain, "unless such facilities are so constructed or flood-proofed to provide adequate safeguards."

According to Kline, State Department of Environmental Resources, Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies are

on
S. Aid

work trying to decide
decision how far the flood
tends in particular areas.

Wilkes-Barre Dazed A Month After Flood

By HOMER BIGART

Special to The New York Times

WILKES-BARRE, July 29—The Wyoming Valley, engulfed by flood waters June 23-24 when the pounding rains of Tropical Storm Agnes swelled the Susquehanna River to record heights, remains prostrate after the most disastrous flood in the nation's history.

More than a month after sirens sounded up and down the valley and 60,000 persons fled to the hills, thousands remain homeless. Some 1,200 persons, mostly elderly, still sleep in hot and steamy schools and churches. The Red Cross continues to feed thousands. Only a handful of business places are open. Until early this week every restaurant and hot dog stand in downtown Wilkes-Barre remained shut.

Property damage is estimated at between half a billion and three-quarters of a billion dollars. There is a growing fear that without massive Federal grants the valley will not recover.

'This Is the Worst'

The statistics are numbing. Drownings were few, thanks to adequate warning, but the destruction of factories, homes, possessions, jobs, the hopes and dreams of a lifetime is unparalleled.

"This is the worst I've ever seen," said Francis X. Tobin, the President's Coordinator for the Office of Emergency Preparedness. "People usually rate the severity of a disaster by the number of lives lost. Here only six persons died. But the loss of property was worse than any previous disaster, greater than the Corpus Christi hurricane of 1970 and greater than the San Fernando Valley earthquake of 1971."

Today, the hub of the busi-

ness district, the Public Square, is surrounded mainly by vacant storefronts. There are a few signs of reviving activity. A newly reopened store advertises a "disaster sale." Around the corner, the Boston Store, the town's biggest department store, has opened its upper

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NYTIMES - 7/30/72



Homes in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., stand precariously, their foundations damaged by flood. Debris covers the street.

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Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

floors, but the main floor and the basement stay closed.

Everywhere teams of youths are cleaning the gray slime out of cellars and ground floors. No one in this valley will ever forget the stench. The stale smell pours from every sidewalk grate, from the open doors of the big churches on Franklin Street, from the open windows of mansions on River Street. The marble lobbies of the banks on West Market have been purged but the banks' elevator cages hold the reek.

Dust Clouds Rise

Clouds of dust from the river's silt rise from the streets. Every day fresh piles of discarded furniture, appliances and mementos line the curbs as housekeepers lose hope of restoring possessions that have been rotted and warped by the flood.

In South Wilkes-Barre and in Kingston, houses torn from their foundations remain abandoned in streets and fields, one of them impaled on a telephone pole. On Charles Street in Wilkes-Barre, two houses lie flattened and two others repose in a crater cut from beneath them when the river broke through a dike nearby on Riverside Drive.

The tragic impact of the disaster is seen on the faces of the survivors. John Novak's eyes reflect horror as he recalls what he saw when a dike broke at Forty Fort Cemetery on the west bank four miles above Wilkes-Barre.

The cemetery contained more than 6,000 bodies. It had been receiving the dead since the last decade of the 18th century. Elinor Wylie, the poet, was buried there in the Hoyt family plot near the tomb of her grandfather, Henry Morton Hoyt, a former Governor of Pennsylvania.

John Novak has been caretaker since 1927. His father tended the cemetery before him, and his son works there now. He watched from the gate house as the murky water engulfed the lowest headstones. Suddenly a wide section of the pilings the Army Corps of Engineers built after the 1936 flood was undermined. The floodwaters coursed beneath the pilings with a hydraulic force that tossed gravestones about like match boxes. Three granite mausoleums weighing tons were shattered. Big trees were uprooted. Coffins and vaults were spewed from the ground.

Saw Coffins Bobbing

"I saw a wave eight to 10 feet high come across the flats, and on it coffins bobbed like surfboards," Mr. Novak said.

He stared transfixed, he recalled, until the borough siren gave seven blasts, the signal to evacuate the town.

According to Harry B. Schooley Jr., vice president of the United Penn Bank of Wilkes-Barre, who is president of the Forty Fort cemetery, more than 2,000 cadavers were swept out by the flood. As of yesterday, exactly 1,000 had been recovered. They have been reinterred in Memorial Shrine Cemetery in Franklin Township eight miles from Forty Fort. The military police still bar visitors from the Forty Fort graveyard. Elinor Wylie's grave was not disturbed.

The cultural resources of the valley were dealt a crippling blow. Wilkes-Barre's two colleges, Wilkes and King's were hard hit, and so was Wyoming Seminary, a preparatory school across the river in Kingston.

At Wilkes College the damage exceeded \$10-million, according to the president, Dr. Francis J. Michelini. The heaviest loss was to the college library, where 53,000 volumes were destroyed, and to the Dorothy Dickson Darte Music Hall.

"We had scrimped and saved to buy two Steinway concert grands at \$12,000 each, and a new \$10,000 organ," Dr. Michelini said. "The pianos collapsed and are a total loss. We hope the organ can be salvaged."

Another heartbreak came, he said, when after weeks of work by students who volunteered to scrape the mud from dormitory walls, it was discovered that the plaster smelled of mildew and had lost its resistance to fire. The plaster will have to be replaced, so all the student labor was lost.

Dr. Michelini was attending a conference in Harrisburg on June 23 when his wife called at 7 A.M. to report that she and their three daughters had been evacuated from their River Street home. He raced back to Wilkes-Barre in time to move the college records to the second floor of the administration building.

There was only about a foot of water in the library basement at 2 P.M. he recalled, and although the city was already under a state of "extreme emergency," the dikes, except at Forty Fort, seemed to be holding. In late afternoon the river appeared to be receding.

"Oh, boy, we're home free," Dr. Michelini told his staff, but the exultation was short-lived. That night the river began to rise rapidly again, reaching a record crest of 40.6 feet at 6:15 A.M. Saturday.

By daybreak, all of the 58 Wilkes College buildings were flooded with the single exception of the one housing the visiting team's locker rooms. The bleachers went downstream 70 yards but will be restored in time for the football home "The library is the nerve center of the college," said the college president, "the Rev. Lane Kilburn, "and it is gone. We need outright grants to replace the collections with microfilm."

King's also lost equipment for its chemistry department including a \$25,000 Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectro Photometer.



Osterhout Free Library, the largest public library in the valley, lost 85,000 books including its reference and circulating library and almost all of its periodicals. Elizabeth Hesser, the librarian, said estimates of damage ranged from \$850,000 to \$900,000.

Nearly 11,000 of those affected by the flood are 65 years old and over. Some 200 of the elderly are still sleeping in classrooms and halls of G. A. R. High School, the only one of three Wilkes-Barre high schools untouched by the flood. Many of them subsist on welfare and Social Security checks.

They sit idle and morose in the central hallway. The Red Cross has tried to keep them happy by showing them movies at night and bingo games are planned. But there is an air of hopelessness. Many of these

elderly will never return to their old neighborhoods because their dwellings are damaged beyond repair.

Dr. Edward M. Whalen, staff psychiatrist for the Wilkes-Barre Mental Health Center, said the community was beginning to sense the full impact of the tragedy after an initial period of numbing shock for some and for most a grim but engrossing battle for survival.

He had been quoted as saying the valley faced "a depressing, frustrating, almost suicidal period." No increase was reported in suicides or suicide threats, he said, but he added, "We are anticipating a great increase in demand for services."

The Wyoming Valley is a 15-mile stretch of the valley of the Susquehanna River from Pittston to Nanticoke, Pa. Wyoming

is derived from the Lenape Indian M'cheuwomink, meaning "on the great plain."

There has been surprisingly little rancor in the valley. Some anger was expressed over slowness by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in providing mobile homes: There were 9,400 applicants for the 4,000 trailers on order.

Henry Greenwald, a lawyer, said he had heard complaints that the warning of a record flood crest came too late. Had the warning been given a few hours earlier, factories could have saved millions of dollars in inventories and householders could have moved more belongings to upper floors. As it was, people went to bed on the night of June 22 confident that the floodwaters would not surpass the 1936 mark of 34 feet and

that the dikes, built to contain a 38-foot crest, would hold.

Joseph F. Collis, managing editor of The Wilkes-Barre Times Leader, said: "I heard that radio stations in New Jersey and Connecticut were predicting a flood peak of 30 to 40 feet for this valley at the same time that the Pennsylvania forecasting service was predicting only 27 feet. When I left the office at 10 P.M. I figured I'd just get a little water in the cellar."

"The flood forecasting service was either wrong or tardy or both," Mr. Collis said.

Despite the extent of the disaster, storefronts in Wilkes-Barre are plastered with cheering signs: "The Valley With A Heart. Coming Back Better Than Ever."

"It'll be a year or a year and a half," predicted Brig. Gen.

Mitchell Jenkins, a retired Army officer who is a lawyer, "but the valley will come back."

Legislation pending in Congress would raise from \$2,500 to \$5,000 the amount of Small Business Administration loans to be "forgiven" for flood victims and would reduce interest rates on amounts over \$5,000 from 5½ per cent to 1 per cent.

But almost everyone in the valley, including many of the bankers and business leaders, feel this is woefully inadequate. They say most flood victims would go hopelessly in debt trying to finance new homes and refinance businesses.

Some propose Federal legislation that would treat flood losses as insured fire losses and that the insurance be made retroactive for the victims of Tropical Storm Agnes.

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AUG 9 1972

STRESSTEEL



August 7, 1972

SPECIAL SESSION - YES / HIGHWAYS - NO

In the vernacular of America's favorite sport: highways are 0 for 2 at the plate. And that's not too surprising when politics is pitching the fast curves.

The Governor issued his call for a special session of the General Assembly to weigh flood relief legislation, and the controversial pay raises for the legislators. In all, eleven measures will be considered - but the Governor backed off from including in the call any legislation dealing with increasing highway user taxes to pay for restoration of flood-damaged roads, streets, bridges and highways.

S-o-o-o-o. . .highways were struck out by Agnes, they failed to get on base in the regular legislative session immediately following the storm's big inning, and now in the extra innings of the Special Session, highways won't reach base again.

It's hard to chide the Governor, though. He tipped his hand and gave advance notice of his game plan. In an election year, who can blame the politicians for sacrificing a responsibility such as raising money for roads, streets and bridges.

The Governor's reasons for excluding highways is well summed up in his proclamation dated August 7, 1972 (excerpts enclosed for your information). But this only bears out what Frankie PHIA has stated all along: there's a lot of misinformation going around about the post-flood highway situation.

This much IS known, however, by anyone sufficiently concerned to get the picture: Pennsylvania needs more money NOW for restoration of flood-damaged highways, regardless of the promises of federal assistance.

The trouble isn't in proving the need. The trouble's in Agnes' lousy timing - letting loose her fury in an election year!



Monday, August 7, 1972

(excerpts from)

STATEMENT BY GOVERNOR MILTON J. SHAPP ON PROCLAMATION
CALLING A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FOR FLOOD RELIEF AND ACTION ON COMPENSATION
COMMISSION REPORT

In addition to the measures specified in the call of the Special Session, two other proposals had been advanced earlier which are not included for consideration in my call for the Special Session.

First, an emergency increase in the liquid fuels tax had been discussed. There is no question that additional finances will be needed to rebuild roads and bridges damaged during the recent flood. However, a difference of opinion has arisen between federal and state officials concerning the amount of the cost the federal government will pick up for the highway and bridge program.

Since my initial announcement of the possibility of a fuels tax increase, federal officials have indicated that they will pay all repair costs "eligible" for Disaster Relief Act Assistance.

There is a difference of opinion at this time, however, between state and federal officials concerning the interpretation of what "eligible" will be.

Also, the experience of other states indicates that federal payments fall short of the total need. South Dakota, for example, has recovered only 50% of its costs. West Virginia has recovered 80%.

In addition, full federal payment for work done by the states in many cases takes up to give or take six years. We are still waiting to be paid for highway reimbursement for the Chester flood last September.

Because of the great differences of opinion which exist at the present time, I have decided not to include an emergency gas tax increase in the Special Session, but will make an announcement of any need in this regard at a later date when the situation is clarified.

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Ed Schuchter's
photo