

Sydney, Nebraska, plows its way into the news!

Newspapers and magazines, in their rush to write up multi-million dollar mergers and huge orders for new aircraft, seldom take notice of small communities—but when they do, they have a field day. This happened last summer when reporters caught wind of what appeared to be a major foul-up at Sydney, Nebraska, population 6,500.

Located about 150 miles northeast of Denver on the Frontier route system, Sydney's airport needed a new snowplow to replace one that had been scraping off the single 5,000-ft. runway for the past 38 years . . . but let's hear the story direct from Herb Red Cloud who is ALEA's representative at the three-man station:

"We really don't have a whole lot of snow here," he says, "but the airport manager, Lloyd Carr (whose son, by the way, is a Frontier pilot), figured the old plow might not last through another winter, so he put in for a new one. The town was to pay 10% of the cost, with the Federal Aviation Administration taking care of the balance.

"Well, the application was sent to Washington, and back came what the town manager thought was an FAA requirement calling for \$133,000 worth of improvements — first, a \$45,000 plow, then a \$66,000 garage to put it in, and finally an overall plan for the airport that would cost \$22,000."

Red Cloud says that the manager's response (after he cooled off) was to tell the FAA that Sydney couldn't possibly come up with the \$13,300 needed to defray its share of the total cost. Whereupon the feds backed down quickly, saying there had been a misunderstanding, and that they would be glad to cooperate on a new plow, alone—provided it cost at least \$5,000.

All of this controversy, of course, was happily reported by the papers which saw it as a prime example of how big government is anxious to throw money around, whether or not local communities want or need improvements. In this instance, however, the misunderstandings were cleared up before damage was done, and there is no reason to fear that the Sydney airport will be snowed in this winter.

If it is, maybe Herb Red Cloud will come to the rescue — as his great grandfather, a Sioux Indian chief, did for his tribe 100 years ago. At that time, says the ALEA member, westward expansion was halted at Ft. Kearny under a treaty his ancestor negotiated with the government. But when pioneers broke the treaty and resumed their march across the plains, Chief Red Cloud led a raid on the fort and drove out the U.S. troops — the first and only time that had ever been done.

Well, that's all past history now, and the area around Sydney is very quiet. Too quiet, says Herb, since the army closed its ordnance base several years ago, causing the population to drop from about 8,000 to the present 6,500. There is, however, plenty of activity at the airport at least four times a day. That's when Frontier's Convair 580's and DeHavilland Twin Otters fly in from Denver or Alliance to be met by (in addition to Red Cloud) two other union members — Station Mgr. Jerry Miller, and Station Agt. Ken Steffens. All are with FL/ALEA Sub-Council 47b.

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