

# The 1960s--Declining Farm Population and Large Load Growth

With the decline in the number of active farms, some of the vacant farms were bought by local farmers as they expanded their operations. This availability of land also brought to our area a new group of people, the Hutterites. With a communal life-style, two or three vacant farms could be purchased, offering sufficient land on which several families could live. Although the number of farm services gradually decreased each year, sales continued to increase monthly and annually; and January, 1961, became the first month FEM sold a million kilowatt hours in a single month, quite a contrast to 1950 when the total sales for the whole year were slightly over the one million mark.

Frieda Martel became the first woman director in the state of South Dakota to serve on a rural electric cooperative board when she was appointed to fill the vacancy created in 1960 when her husband, T. T. Martel passed away.

Growing electrical loads in McPherson County required more distribution capacity in that area. Plans based on this need resulted in the construction of three miles of transmission line and the Leola substation which was energized on December 18, 1963. A heavy duty three phase line built from north of Leola to Long Lake provided a new source of power for Long Lake.

When increased sales had reached a certain point in 1964, the directors and management were able to reduce electric rates. An all electric rate with a low step of 1.5¢ per kilowatt hour, regardless of use, was put into effect. The entire rate structure was revised which resulted in a substantial reduction in FEM members electric bills.

The need for more electrical capacity in Faulk County required the construction of a substation in the Cresbard area. Twenty-five miles of 46 KV transmission line was constructed from Ipswich to the new substation located west of Cresbard. Manager A. W. Grage threw the switch energizing the substation on February 13, 1964. This was the first FEM substation to be located within the boundaries of Faulk County.

The promotional statement during the 1960s was "Be Modern--Go All Electric". Modern electric tools and appliances were featured in many high school shop and home economics courses. Electrical appliances such as washers, dryers, stoves, refrigerators, TVs, radios, and sewing machines were purchased for the home, and push button feeding installations, electric milking operations, and security lights were installed outside. FEM Electric reached another milestone in kilowatt hour sales of electricity in 1964 as this was the first year since the lines were energized that sales were over 1,000,000 kWh each month for the entire twelve-month period. In spite of a declining number of farms, sales figures continued to increase.

Better service continuity and voltage in western Faulk and Edmunds County required that a new 1500 KVA substation west of Onaka be built to replace the existing one west of Tolstoy. A transmission line connected to the MDU line south of Tolstoy supplied power to the Onaka Substation which was put into service on April 14, 1965. The Faulkton Warehouse was built in 1965 to provide an outpost station and warehouse storage in Faulk County.

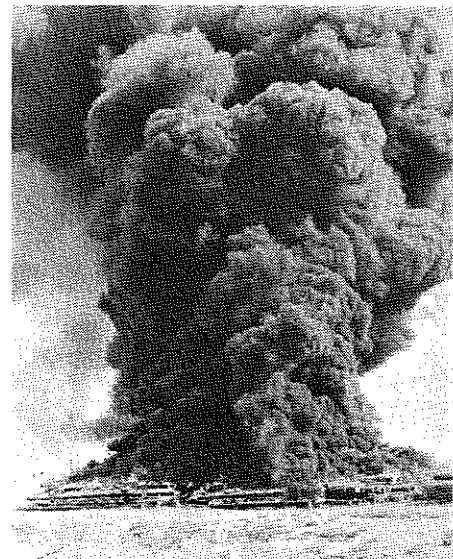
The old Tolstoy substation was then moved from its original site to continue to serve FEM members at a new location near Roscoe, and on October 14, 1966, it became the Roscoe Substation, for a total of six substations.

The winter of 1968-69 was long remembered as the winter of the blizzard and ice storm that caused widespread damages to the lines and extended outages. FEM Electric's first underground cable was installed during 1969 and connected consumers with the proposed Newtown Substation.

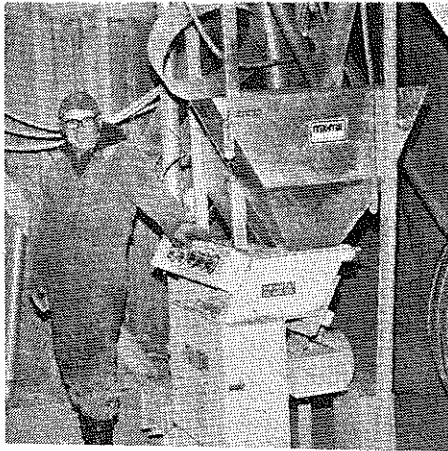
In October of 1969, the FEM Board of Directors took an important step in their future financing options by becoming a charter member of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC).



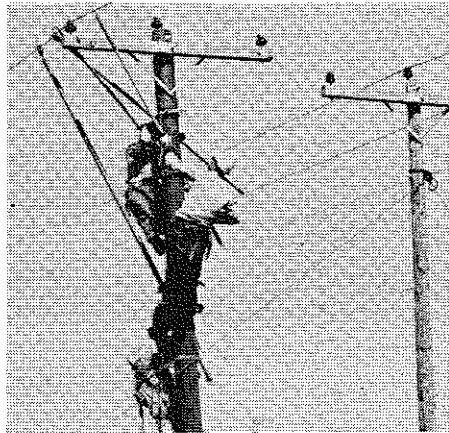
Pictured above are REA Administrator Norman M. Clapp, two unidentified rural electric officials, United States President John F. Kennedy, Albert C. Hauffe, and NRECA General Manager Clyde T. Ellis during Mr. Hauffe's tenure as NRECA board president. During 1963-1964, Mr. Hauffe served as president of the local, state, and national boards of directors (FEM, SDREA, and NRECA) concurrently.



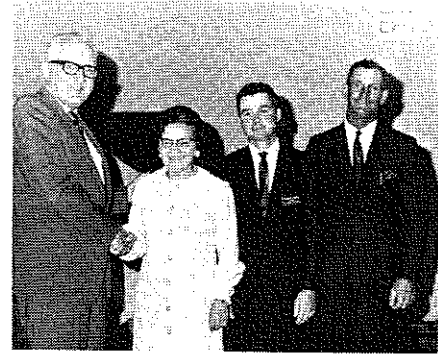
A thick, black cloud of smoke mushroomed above the flames in this 1965 blaze which destroyed 365 FEM utility poles. The poles were stored along the railroad near the elevator in Ipswich.



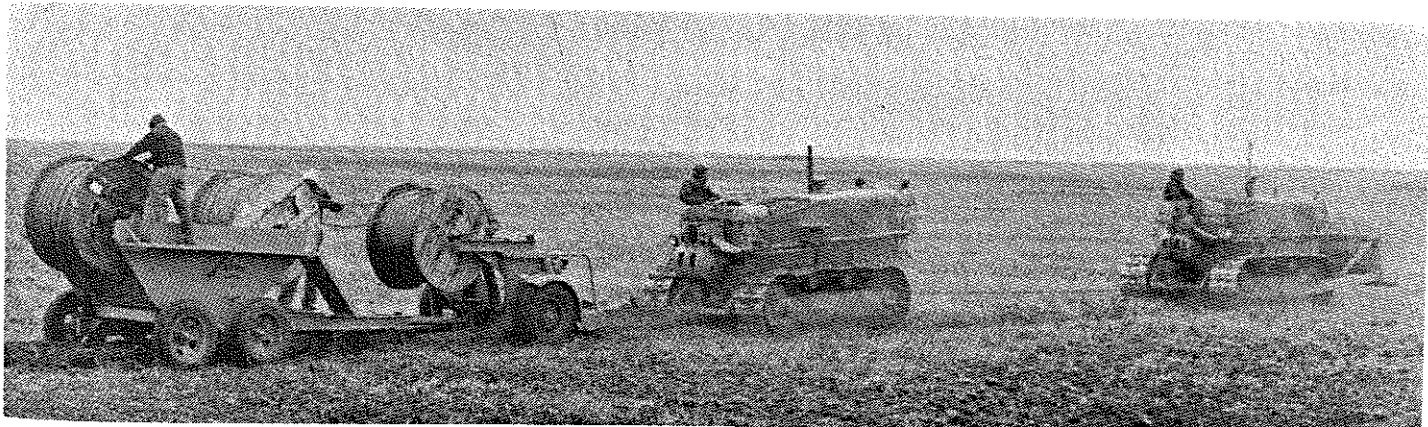
"Be Modern -- Go All Electric" Alden Flakoll is shown with his automated feeding equipment. A control panel is visible to the left.



Using hot sticks allowed FEM linemen to do some of their work on energized lines.



Atty. R.G. Gross, Frieda Martel, Kenneth Deiter, and Martin Schurr. Mrs. Martel was the first woman director in South Dakota.



FEM's first underground was installed in 1969 preparing for the construction of the Newtown Substation.